

Rich Mullins - A Poet Goes Home

↑ kidbrothers.net/release/dec97jan98art.html

Kim Hurley Benson

No one wanted to believe Rich Mullins, one of Christian music's most thoughtful writers, is dead at 41. Heading to Wichita on Sept. 19, he and fellow musician Mitch McVicker, 24, flipped their Jeep, and were thrown onto the road. The driver of a rig swerved to miss the jeep, but hit Rich. In an instant, the artist was snatched away by God. Mitch, who sang in the musical drama Cantic of the Plains with Rich, is home recovering.

Born Oct. 21, 1955, Rich grew up on an Indiana farm, creating songs while he drove a tractor ("the beginning of what some might call a pretty creative streak," he said humbly in a 1992 interview). He recorded nine albums for Reunion. His many No. 1 songs include the praise standard "Awesome God" and "Sing Your Praise to the Lord." Nominated a dozen times for Dove Awards, he never received one, but probably didn't care. "Nashville didn't own Rich, but then, he cared nothing for the things of this world," friend Doris Howard says.

Rich played in the group Zion at Cincinnati Bible College. His "long hair and no shoes" look was his trademark for many years. Rich lived meagerly, sharing a small rental house in Wichita with lifelong musical cohort Beaker (yes, just "Beaker"). Few neighbors realized the two bachelors who drove old trucks and romped with their dogs outside were successful musicians.

A natural teacher, he shared the works of late, great theologians with concert audiences. Rich's wooden dulcimer mallets flew over the strings with impressive ease, but his real ministry happened away from the stage, when he could make ordinary people feel special.

After graduating from Friends University, Rich went to the Navajo Nation in Arizona on a Compassion International project to teach the children music and spread the Gospel. When his career got in the way of teaching, Rich decided to form a music club. He and Mitch lived in a trailer next to the

reservation and were in the process of providing musical instruments for the children when he died.

"He was really complicated," says Nickie Lundgren, a musician who worked in Rich's Ragamuffin Band. "In all the time we spent with Rich touring and recording, I never could figure him out. He didn't think like other people. That's probably what made him so creative."

"Rich was full of terrible and beautiful stories," college friend/adviser Sam Howard says. "The truths he told were whole truths, the good and the bad."

Some say Rich was as content as he could be at the end of his life, only recently signing a recording contract with Myrrh, naming his longtime accountant as his new manager, and roughing out 10 songs for a new album.

"I don't think he would want to be remembered," Beaker says, "because that's not what he was about."

His manager, Jim Dunning, Jr. adds, "Maybe I was just too close to the situation, but it's becoming apparent that Rich's solitary purpose in life has been to tell people how to get to Heaven."

~Kim Hurley Benson

In the spring of 1991, Rich Mullins and RELEASE Magazine began what would become a very special relationship - a relationship that would enable not only editors and staff members to learn more about this mysterious artist, but one that would also allow people across the country to draw closer to him. One learned quickly from his columns (just as with his songs) that Rich not only had a lot to say, but a unique way of saying it. He challenged us. He comforted us. He taught us. We now pay homage to the man whose life was an inspiration to many, with some of his best and most personal writings. Here is Rich in his own upwards:

I am setting out to explain again why Jesus is the only true hope for the world, why we should put our faith in Him and what all of that won't mean...

But then I remember two things. The first thing I remember is how I once won an argument with a heathen friend of mine (who after I had whacked away his last scrap of defense, after I had successfully cut off every possible escape route that he could use, after I had backed him into an

inescapable comer and hit him with a great unarguable truth), he blew me away by simply saying, "I do not want to be a Christian. I don't want your Jesus Christ." There was no argument left to be had or won. Faith is a matter of the I will as much as it is of the intellect. I wanted to believe in Jesus. My friend wanted to believe in himself. In spite of how convincing my reason was, my reason was not compelling.

So, the second thing I remember is this: I am a Christian because I have seen the love of God lived out in the lives of people who know Him. The Word has become flesh and I have encountered God in the people who have manifested (in many "unreasonable" ways) His Presence; a Presence that is more than convincing, it is a Presence that is compelling. I am a Christian, not because someone explained the nuts and bolts of Christianity to me, but because there were people who were willing to be nuts and bolts, who through their obedience to the truth, and not necessarily through their explanation of it, held it together so that I could experience it and be compelled by it to obey. "If I be lifted up," Jesus said. "I will draw all men unto me."

Much that I have read has challenged my opinion and hardened my convictions - I am thankful for it. It is for you (and for me, more in my living than in my writing) to let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven."

("Telling the Joke," Spring 1991)

When I was very young I was afraid of the dark. I hadn't yet learned how not to fear what could not be seen, let alone trust that anything beyond the dark - the unseeable - could be good.

...I thought that headlights, projected by ongoing cars as they moved across the walls of my room, were ghosts. I thought that my dad's team was the secret headquarters of the Communists and that people became "commies" (a fate worse than death) by being kidnapped by the KGB and shipped to Russia to be brainwashed and tortured. This belief put me well within the parameters of imminent danger.

I used to recite the 23rd Psalm to and from the barn. I could say it about three times on my way there and seldom got past, "He maketh me lie down in green..." on the way back. The minute my work was done I would run to the house, bust through the door and pretend that I had not been afraid. I

felt ashamed of those fears and was afraid that they would be with me always - even unto the end of the world.

They weren't. I outsmarted them. I became a teenager. I discovered campouts and hayrides and girls and midnight swims. The dark looked friendlier. I found mystery where I once knew fear. I "put away childish things" - I was sophisticated, and fear of darkness could not cast a shadow of shame on my new, teenaged, undaunted self.

And I threw the baby out with the bathwater. Since I had no fear, I believed that I had no use for the 23rd Psalm. I came to think that religion was a trick people played on themselves when they were confronted with a world that was too big, too overwhelming and too scary for them. No world would be too big for me. I was young and cool and the universe was my parking lot.

And then I turned 30. I had spent six years in college and did not have a degree. I had fallen in love and was badly burned by it. I had bills to pay and life courses to choose. I was trying to keep my head while all around me the world was losing its mind. I was faced with the consequences of my many and varied adventures... and I was alone. I became aware of my smallness and insignificance and the world again seemed full of wonderful and dreadful possibilities.

And one morning I was trying to hurry through my devotional time and thought it was fortunate that part of the reading was Psalm 23. I thought, Oh I know this one well. I can pass over this quickly. But I could not. Because there are scarier things than the dark, and in the course of our lives we grow out of one fear and into a million others. I could not pass over it quickly because all my sophistry and self-delusion was melted away by the power of this simple statement of faith that will not be outgrown - a truth that is bigger than the fears we invent of the confidence we affect:

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy will follow

me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

("23rd at 32," Fall 1991)

My dog, Bear, is a golden retriever that has a more-than-weird fear of storms, an uncanny sense of how to be especially gentle around children, epilepsy, and a coat that is wildly wavy and shines gold. He has a look of nobility - at nine plus years of age. He weighs about 75 pounds and eats very little to maintain that weight. He loves to fetch, especially in water. He hates baths and loves to roll in ... how should I say it? ... stuff that smells.

But the devout part - aside from his obvious charm - that is, the part I most envy - is when a storm comes, Bear unashamedly dashes between my legs. If I lock them together, he attaches himself to whichever leg he is closest to. He does not run away in a storm - he runs to me. I don't know if this is about real safety or if it's about mere comfort, but I know that I would do better to crawl between my Master's legs in those times of storm, than to feign courage or break for another and doubtless inferior shelter.

Of all the things I've had to teach Bear, coming to me was never one. Bear not only loves me, he loves my stuff like I should love God's "stuff" - His church, the Bible, stars, sparrows ... His voice, those things that carry His scent.

Bear takes his medicine (for his epilepsy) well, too. I've never been good at taking medicine. Bear obviously doesn't like it, but he doesn't resist - he's only slightly uncooperative. And, if I try to sneak it to him in his food, he spits it out. If I give it to him from my hand, he swallows it. I try to avoid medicine from God - even to the point of avoiding God. Bear comes up quietly and sits and opens his mouth for it.

Of course, there is one time when Bear runs from me. It's when I practice the cello, and so, who could blame him? But Bear's master is not as good at playing cello as my Master is. Bear's master squeaks and squawks away at his instrument like my Master never will. I have long since given up the ambition to be as good at everything as my Master is - I do hope that my Master will not give up on making me as good at being mastered as is my dog.

("His Master's Voice," Sept/Oct 1994)

My grandparents all repeated themselves a lot. Every ten minutes or so

their conversations would circle and start again, word for word. As they got older an ever-boadenning range of suggestions became cues for an ever-narrowing range of responses: "Yes, well, did I ever tell you about that big storm we had in '39? ... Do you have your driver's license already? ... We had a whopper rain back in ..."

So, you can probably imagine how disturbing it was to me when, after writing a column for this issue of RELEASE - after sprucing and polishing it to a fine shine and faxing it - I realized that it was a nearly exact duplicate of an article I wrote back in '93. Anyway, suddenly everything I thought about saying sounded weirdly like the echo of what I had already said. This, of course, would not be so worrisome to a person with a quieter disposition or even to someone who had any gift other than the "gift of gab." And, granted, imitation is a form of flattery, but that's only true if someone else is imitating you. If you imitate yourself, you just sound conceited. Or old.

Now, a person can overcome conceit though, through prayer and service and devotion. But no amount of fasting or Bible memorizing or church attending will hold sway over aging. If we live long enough, we will get old. And as we get older, we will more and more repeat ourselves as I have already begun to do. Repeatedly.

Not that I am a card-carrying member of the youth cult. I was awful at being young. My adolescence was riddled with that angst-ridden morbidity that seethes with crushes, complexes and bad poetry. The "twenties" were the March of my life - in like a lion, out like a lamb. They were predictably turbulent early on and dissolved into quiet desperation just before passing. At 30 I was relieved of the responsibility to be "young and foolish" - I was not yet old and I was not still young. And God, who is good through all ages, had landed me at last in a place of relative peace and even prosperity.

Of course, just as I wasted my youth by being too goofy, I blemished the high noon of my life by becoming a bit (this is so embarrassing), conceited. It's normal, I guess, but embarrassing nonetheless. And so, God, being good still, is doing what He does, doing what I can't do and undoing what I have done.

God lets us struggle and lets us prosper - we don't all struggle and prosper the same, but we all do both to some degree. And when we have done

enough to think more highly of ourselves than we should, God lets us age. And as we age we begin to forget stuff, our joints stiffen, our heads go a little soft. We drive slower and are less driven; are more embarrassed but less likely to die of that embarrassment and more likely to die of natural causes. Getting old is part of getting past whatever illusion we have about ourselves. It is part of getting free - free from reasonable doubts, irrational conceits, false securities, displaced affections...

And so, let me grow. Let me grow old. Let me grow free. Even if I have to repeat myself to do it.

("Play It Again," March/April 1995)

By the time you get this issue of RELEASE and read (if you do read) this little essay of mine, I will have celebrated my fortieth birthday. In my mid- to late-20s, I had some romantic, highly exaggerated notions about an early death - taking off at 33 - joining the company of Mozart, Foster, Jesus and other immortals who checked out in their early thirties. But this was a party I didn't get an invitation to - a gang I didn't belong in (me not being a genius and all). So, in Chicago I had my own party - celebrating the fun of being alive as opposed to the mystique of having an untimely death.

Because it's better to be alive than to be dead - that's for sure. And believe it or not - there are certain advantages in being 40 over being 18. Of course, there are certain disadvantages too, but - in keeping with the spirit of the 90s, I don't mind viewing those "disadvantages" as "challenges." Paul, I think had the perfect take on the pluses and minuses of life and death - "to live is Christ, to die is gain," so, that having been settled, I have made out a list of credits and debits about being younger and older - an issue that didn't seem as large or confused in the first century as it does at the end of the 20th:

At 18, if you have oversized aspirations, the whole world sees you as a dreamer. At 40, you get a reputation for being a visionary.

At 18, if you've thrown in the towel, you're called a loser. At 40, you're called down-to-earth, a realist.

At 18, if you play in the rain or howl at the moon, if you paint or invent or compose songs or poems, you're accused of being childish. At 40, you are praised for being childlike.

At 18, time fits you like a pair of pants big enough to swim in. At 40, time fits so tight you can't button it's collar.

At 18, people misjudge your character flaws as being mere bad habits that they might change. At 40, people misjudge every bad habit as being the mark of weak character and they either dismiss you as being a lesson in reprobation or just accept you as a friend. Anyway, you graduate from being a missionary project into being either a lost cause or one of the gang.

At 18, no one knows as much as you. At 40, you begin to understand the wisdom of Solomon in his saying: Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise - why destroy yourself? Do not be overwicked and do not be a fool - why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes (Ecclesiastes 7:16-18).

So, stay alive. "A living dog is better than a dead lion" - and happy birthday to all of you from all of me.

("The Big 4-Oh," Dec 1995)

In Matthew 16:13-19, we have the fullest account of the conception of the church (in the same way that we often look at Acts 2 as being an account of her birth).

I call it a conception because for all that we don't know about conception, we at least believe that at that moment all that we are made of and all that we will grow into, is set or founded. A conception is that moment when something unique, dynamic, and alive is defined. Something that never was before begins - a new possibility becomes real and takes on its own identity.

Jesus asked, "Who do men say that I am?" and at least four answers were given by at least two apostles. As soon as He got His answer, Jesus dropped the whole discussion as if to say that the world He made and that would not receive Him would never be allowed to define Him. No brilliantly composed picture, no delicately balanced compromise about Him would do. He would not refigure Himself to fit their miscalculated equations of disfigure Himself to fit their undersized frames. The ideas that the world had (and still has) about Him were of no interest to Him because they were and still are irrelevant to who He was, is, and ever shall be. Maybe He

asked because He knew that the answers would provide a bleak and bland backdrop against which the answer to His next question would really pop.

So He asked, "Who do you say that I am?" And here, Peter distinguishes himself answering not by reason but by revelation, "You are Messiah, the Son of the Living God!" To this Jesus answered (and here I'll ask you to endure my somewhat lopsided but maybe not altogether inappropriate paraphrase), "You blessed little Pebble! Your answer didn't come from this lost little world, but it came from back Home. Now you're a rock and on this rock I'm building My house..."

People have long tried to distinguish between Peter and this confession, but (not that we can settle that debate here) who can sever a man from his beliefs without destroying both? What is conviction if it is disembodied? What remains of a man when he is left without his thoughts? Apart from each other, both are nothing. In their union there is something that never was before - something unique, dynamic, and alive. And in this union, the stuff of which the Church is made and the thing that - if she does well - she will grow into, is set. Here at Peter's confession, the truth of heaven connects with human experience and the Church is conceived.

And just as the heavens declare the glory of God, the Church pronounces the Name of His Son. And as the skies proclaim the work of His Hands, the Church testifies to the work of His Messiah. Red flesh and blood confess Jesus' Lordship, then drop the ball and are baffled by the immensity of that confession. People who are not pointlessly perfect receive an unattainable revelation and then misunderstand and betray the Truth. They foolishly divide and become divisive and yet He makes them one. They stumble and limp and sometimes turn to lesser gods and then are embraced by the One they've abandoned. As Paul says, "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God..." and this confession that Jesus is Messiah still changes pebbles into rock and as long as the Church confesses, she will continue to be what is in her genes to become.

We've got pretty good genes. We'll do well to grow into them.

("Pretty Good Genese," Nov/Dec 1996)

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Gone, but Not Forgotten

↑ kidbrothers.net/release/junjul98art.html

Chris Well

Death is rarely convenient. When Rich Mullins died Sept. 19, 1997, not only were fans robbed of future poetry, songwriting and performances, but his new record label was left in an awkward position. Although work had begun on a new record with his brilliant friends the Ragamuffins (taking their name from a book by Brennan Manning), all that remained was a weakly-recorded demo. Out of respect for Rich's art and ministry, and for fans who want so much to hear Rich's final recordings, the Ragamuffins make the best of a bad situation with The Jesus Record. The double-disc set includes that original demo tape, just Rich's lone voice accompanied by one simple, acoustic instrument (trading off between piano and guitar). The second disc features the same songs, fleshed out with a full band and guest vocalists, including Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, Phil Keaggy and Ashley Cleveland.

With the poor recording of Rich singing these songs (all but-the monumental "Man of No Reputation," which Rich had intended to record later), it was impossible to build an album around more than one of his vocal tracks (even The Beatles could only pull it off twice). But either half of The Jesus Record alone would seem incomplete: The Rich half, with the system noise and telltale thumps and clicks of a simple tape recorder, carries a great deal of sentimental value, but is hardly a full work of art in its own right; the Ragamuffins half, while fuller and more accomplished, would seem empty without more of Rich's voice.

Together, the two discs strike a balance. The finished half displays the Ragamuffins in fine form, demonstrating why Rich, often canny enough to surround himself with great artists, considered these fine, fine performers (every last one of 'em) worthy of his band.

Rick Elias takes lead vocals on several songs, including a brilliantly world-weary reading of "Man of No Reputation." The Ragamuffins share leads on the playful, country-flavored "You Did Not Have a Home," with Elias, Mark Robertson and Jimmy A trading off leads and then blending

harmonies; then the three are joined by Phil Keaggy on the jangly "All the Way to Kingdom Come."

Ashley Cleveland gives a subdued performance on the dramatic "Jesus." Amy Grant delivers a low, nearly breathy voice on the stately "Nothing is Beyond You." Michael W. Smith brings a soulful approach to "Heaven in His Eyes." The final song, "Where I Am," starts with Rich's original demo, and the Ragamuffins build around it, with Michael and Amy and an informal choir sharing vocals.

It's difficult to listen to the *The Jesus Record* without a lump in your throat. It's also impossible to listen without considering the shadow of tragedy surrounding it. It's a selfish reaction, of course, if we believe Rich is home with his Lord - but it is a loss to us, nonetheless. It's also frustrating to think of that great, lost record - the individual components are here, but forever split into separate halves. Fortunately, with the final arrangements so closely following the path Rich carved on his original cassette tape, you find yourself closing your eyes and imagining what the final product might have been like.

As a tribute to the music and to the Lord he served, *The Jesus Record* is appropriate. Each of the 10 songs revolves around Christ. As with the four Gospels, which reflect four different facets of His character, *The Jesus Project* seems to closely follow a Christ that Rich so desperately tried to follow in life - a Christ who, like Rich, rarely behaved within the confines of society's expectations. The Jesus we see in *The Jesus Record* spent time with sinners, hung with thieves, was never preoccupied with owning things and didn't even have a home on Earth.

It's likely Rich would be uncomfortable with someone reading so much into so simple of a record. As he so often shunned the spotlight in life, it's especially appropriate his final record so obviously spotlights Jesus. Yet, it's impossible to listen to "Where I Am" - with Rich's reedy, tape-recorded voice leading his friends in a chorus based on Christ's promise He was preparing a home for us - without feeling a certain pang of extra meaning. The song is in the voice of Christ, promising those of us who tarry, there will be a home for us in Heaven; it is also a reminder Rich is already there.

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The Last Words of a Ragamuffin

↑ kidbrothers.net/release/augsep98art1.html

Rich Mullins was a lot of things before he left us: exceptional artist and songwriter; rough-around-the-edges friend; passionate student; generous and kind mentor; gifted teacher and missionary; devout church reformer. But mostly, in and beyond all of these things, he was a lover of Jesus. Every song that Rich sang, every word he spoke, every sentence he wrote, and everything he did followed from his conviction that Jesus was exactly Who He claimed to be: Saviour, Lord, Deliverer, and (especially) the One Who brought "good news to the poor". Anyone who spent much time with Rich understood he had grown to believe in a Jesus many Christians rarely consider - the Son of God Who abandoned power and brought salvation to the broken, weak and outcast. In the writings of his friend, author and speaker Brennan Manning, Rich found a name for those Jesus loves: Ragamuffins.

Rich knew he was one. When he gathered a band of like-minded, like-broken kindred spirits and fellow travelers - Rick Elias, Jimmy Abegg, Mark Robertson, Aaron Smith - he named them The Ragamuffin Band. Rich was convinced these established and highly acclaimed musicians had never received their due, and felt that together they could make music close to the heart of Jesus.

"None of us were forced to be Ragamuffins to make a living," Elias says. "We were and are Ragamuffins because we found a home with each other and with Rich. He gave us a place where we could be ourselves, where we were respected as artists and where we could grow together in Christ."

For the past five years, Rich toured and made records with the Ragamuffins. If you talked with Rich about them, or listened to them rehearse, it was clear this was more than his backup band. They were first and foremost friends on his journey to know, love and share Jesus.

It is appropriate and wonderful that the last work Rich left us is *The Jesus Record*. The most unified, mature collection of his abbreviated career, *The Jesus Record* represents the culmination of Rich's artistic mission: a group of extraordinary songs, recorded by his best friends, which together make up a surprisingly subtle extended meditation on the person, message and mission of Christ.

A Record That Was "Needed"

For several years Rich had talked about making an album that would unfold the Jesus

that we quickly gloss over on our way to church or Christian concerts. He wanted us to see the raw, rough Jesus Who had dirty fingernails and Who hung out with all the wrong people and loved them just as they were. He said it was a record that was "needed", because for too many of us, Jesus had become domesticated, ordinary and predictable. The record was also necessary for those who believed Jesus to be otherwise, because they often felt abandoned and alone in their convictions. Such was the nature of Rich's work: he sought to at once challenge and heal, stir and comfort, agitate and settle.

Last summer, after nearly 15 years of making records, Rich sat down in the Navajo hogan that was his home and spoke with his band, his new record company, and his manager about what he wanted *The Jesus Record* to be. "He demanded that we focus on Jesus," Robertson says. "Not just in terms of subject matter. He wanted this project to make us better, more faithful as a band and as individuals."

"Rich knew exactly what we needed," adds Elias, who produced *The Jesus Record*. "He knew this band well. He was a Ragamuffin, too; he knew we needed Jesus as much as he did. He wanted to make a record that would force us all to spend time focusing on Jesus."

Rich settled on 10 songs - eight he had written or co-written, plus "Man of No Reputation", written by Elias, and "Surely God Is With Us", co-written by Robertson and Beaker. He gave his label a cassette of songs crudely recorded on a boombox at a small church in Illinois. He told them it would be his best record to date. Despite its roughness, the tape was extraordinary. Rich's performances are playful, vivid and passionate. The demo (which makes up the first half of the double-disc set) is a testimony to his commitment.

The Jesus Record would be, Rich insisted, a Ragamuffin record. In fact, he originally conceived it as all the band members sharing vocals equally. "Rich was so unselfish," Abegg remembers. "It simply never occurred to him to view us as anything but partners in the process. We were peers; because of that, everyone in the circle had an equal say. He simply wanted to empower us - to use his own platform to life us up."

As they sat together, however, the band members argued that while, yes, they were a band of equals, Rich needed to be their "lead singer". Laughs Elias, "We knew if Rich sang the songs, more people would buy the record. But I guess he got his way."

In those discussions it was decided Elias would produce the record. "Rick was really the only choice," Robertson says. "He understood both Rich's music and loved Rich the man. He respected that Rich wanted to make music accessible to the mainstream, but also was able to make it with an edge. Perhaps more importantly, he shared Rich's desire to make the record about Jesus, not about the band or Rich himself."

Grief

Pre-production on the songs was only a week away when a tragic accident on an Illinois road took Rich's life. The Ragamuffins took refuge in each other, trying to grieve as Rich would have wanted. They prayed together, gathered for the kind of Irish wakes Rich often celebrated, played his songs, laughed at each other's stories about Rich and wondered what was next. *The Jesus Record* was foremost in their minds. The Ragamuffins met with Myrrh and wondered what to do with the songs. Everyone who had heard them believed they needed to be heard.

The question was how. "We didn't want to exploit either his memory or these songs simply for sentiment or profit," says Jim Chaffee, vice president of Myrrh. "We knew we needed to be wise and tender with this gift Rich had left us. More than any other project we were involved in, we knew if we were to proceed, everything we did had to be grounded in Christ."

In this spirit, the Ragamuffins and Myrrh decided to proceed with the project as planned. The Ragamuffins would record the songs themselves with some of Rich's closest musical friends, the band would have full creative freedom, a portion of the proceeds would directly benefit Rich's work with young artists on Navajo reservations, and their version of *The Jesus Record* would be released with an enhanced version of Rich's original demo recording.

Robertson says, "Rich told me this was the only one of his records that he felt had to be made. It was that important to him. I guess it was just like him to give it away."

The Studio

The Ragamuffins started by listening to the songs again, focusing on their center: Jesus. They found songs full of the tensions Rich felt so keenly when he approached Christ; songs that reflected the joy and challenge and fear and excitement of confronting a real, flesh-and-blood Saviour. In that tension, the record grew to become a blending of Rich's view of Jesus, his theology and of Rich himself.

"I suppose there was a temptation to make a tribute - a big, somber record designed to play on sentiment," Elias says. "But faithfulness to Rich's vision demanded the record be a juxtaposition of reverence and hilarity and intimacy and struggle; that is how Rich understood and responded to Christ."

"We simply didn't have the luxury to make any compromises," Robertson says. "We knew

how important these songs were to Rich. We knew how dear they had become to us - nearly as dear as Rich himself. It was a massive responsibility."

Great care was given to *The Jesus Record's* guest list. Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith offered to sing before the record company had even decided to go ahead with the project. "Their inclusion was a no-brainer," says Elias with a smile. "They were friends of Rich's that he loved and who understood the heart of his art." As the Ragamuffins spent more time with the songs, the other choices were easy: Ashley Cleveland was Rich's favorite singer (they had toured together extensively); Phil Keaggy was a hero of sorts to Rich. "At that point, we knew we had enough," Elias says. "We weren't making 'We Are The World', after all. We were making Rich Mullins' record."

The Jesus Record became a kind of six-month journey for the Ragamuffins. "This record was one of the loneliest experiences of my life," Abegg says. "I mean, we were all together. Everyone was there who needed to be. Except Rich. I kept expecting him to walk through the door and pull up a chair."

The Songs

The disc begins with Elias singing the anthem "My Deliverer", Rich's hymn of yearning and faith. Complete with a full orchestra, arranged by Tom Howard and recorded in London's Abbey Road Studios, Rich hoped the song's worship chorus and confession of need could create the same sort of feel that "Awesome God" stirred, but in the context of a mature, biblically-grounded reflection.

Like many of his songs, it's set against the backdrop of history; this time in Mary and Joseph's flight to Egypt and their longing for the deliverer Who was their own child. Added against this backdrop is Rich's own longing for personal deliverance and confidence that it's available in Jesus.

"Surely God Is With Us" follows, with Robertson on lead vocal. The song contrasts the majestic expectations of the opening track with the scandalous notion of God wrapped in flesh hanging out with sinners. For those who had ever seen Rich's eyes twinkle when reading the Gospels, it's easy to understand why he chose the song.

"Nothing Is Beyond You" is another shift, moving from the radical notion that God became flesh to the even more radical idea that a man could be God. Sung by Amy Grant, the song is a classic Mullins ballad, perfectly suited for her plaintive vocals. Says Grant, "The line in this song that slayed me the first time I heard it, and slays me every time I hear it, is *I cannot explain the way that You came to love me, except to say that nothing is beyond You*. Rich's honesty addresses our greatest fear - that somehow, in the final analysis, we

might find ourselves just beyond the love of God. That's the greatest fear we can know. Rich takes the focus off of our unloveableness and reminds us that nothing is beyond God. This is good news."

All the Ragamuffins share vocals on the front-porch/country rock of "You Did Not Have a Home". Grounded in raw, folk instrumentation (with dobro, harmonica, and accordian), the song revisits and reinforces a crucial Mullins theme - the radical emptying of Jesus in the Incarnation - and focuses on the Christ Who was homeless, wifeless, and refused to come in power and might.

Anchoring the middle of the record is the quietly lush "Jesus". Sung by Ashley Cleveland in hushed, nearly broken tones, the song turns the record toward the heart of Rich's faith. Full of confession, need, self-doubt and yearning, it is a cry of faith for the relentless tenderness of Jesus to walk with, touch, calm and heal us. "Ashley's vocal on 'Jesus' is among the best performances I've ever heard, anywhere, anytime," Elias says. "She inhabited the song in a way I didn't think possible. It was humbling."

"All the Way to Kingdom Come" features Phil Keaggy's joyous lead vocals joining the Ragamuffins in a mop-top shaking, jangly romp that may be the most whimsical music Rich ever wrote. The theme is equally celebratory, playfully juxtaposing our expectations for a saviour against what Christ actually brought.

Rich had often told anyone who would listen that Elias' "Man of No Reputation" was his favorite song. Written five years ago and featured for the past several years at Ragamuffins concerts, it was one of the first songs chosen for the project. A meditation on St. Paul's hymn to Christ's self-emptying in Philippians 2, the song weaves the record's themes of Christ's humility, relentless affection, and the triumph of grace together into one gentle song. Rich knew the song had all the marks of a contemporary classic, and insisted it be heard. "I think Rick gives the performance of his life on this song," says Abegg. "It is some of the most focused, soulful singing I've ever heard."

Michael W. Smith joins the Ragamuffins on "Heaven In His Eyes", a deceptively complex (and bittersweet) song that examines what is perhaps the most beguiling aspect of the Incarnation - that many did not (and still do not) recognize Jesus for Who He was, and that He had to die to fulfill His Gospel.

Elias sings the most difficult song on *The Jesus Record*. "Hard To Get" is quintessential Mullins, a Psalm-like prayer of lament against God's silence, a silence that too often feels deafening. It is as courageous and bold a lyric as one can imagine in the too often sugary-sweet world of Christian pop. One gets the feeling Rich wrote these lines as much for us as for himself.

The Jesus Record ends with the guest artists joining the Ragamuffins in a new sing-along, "That Where I Am, There You May Also Be". With lyrics constructed from excerpts of the Gospels, the song is a simple reminder of the nearness of God the incarnation brought, and the hope it gives us. Its encouragement is made especially potent by the inclusion of Rich's boombox vocals. Appropriately, the record fades with the sounds of Rich's hammer dulcimer playing "Nothing But The Blood of Jesus".

The Future

There is triumph and tragedy in *The Jesus Record*, just as there was in Rich Mullins' life. The tragedy is ours - we lost Rich at the peak of his skills and the height of his artistic passion, just as many of his ventures in missions outreach were coming together. He would hate our sentiment, but we can only grieve his loss.

But the triumph is ours as well. Rich's vision of a record that draws us to Jesus survived to challenge and encourage us. And in its survival, there is opportunity for his vision of outreach to Native children to prosper beyond his dreams. Perhaps that alone - being drawn to Jesus in a new way and being enabled to share Him with those we often ignore - will be enough to help us in our grief.

And when (Jesus) had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord...And He began to say unto them, This day is scripture fulfilled in your ears.

~Luke 4:17-21

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A Man of No Reputation

↑ kidbrothers.net/release/augsep98art2.html

Brian Q. Newcomb

Godric, the reluctant saint in Frederick Buechner's Pulitzer-nominated novel, is a character that came to mind when interviewing Rich Mullins some years ago. Talking with Rich then, and observing his music ministry since, the two have become linked in my mind.

In the novel, the biographer fails to include all his subject's honest failings, saying, "For the sake of him who is himself the Truth, I leave some small truths out." The desire to see religious leaders, and even musicians, as something better or holier than they really are is a common failing. We prefer to see as sinless or at least closer to God than we ourselves, those who guide and inspire us.

Thus, Godric is praised and remembered not for his humanity and sinfulness, but for his spiritual austerity and humility. Sadly, Rich Mullins is remembered the same way.

Best known for early praise favorites like "Awesome God" and Amy Grant's hit "Sing Your Praise to the Lord", his later albums raised expectations that Rich's best work was yet to come. Alas, his legacy has only one more chapter: The Jesus Record, an album of his songs recorded posthumously by The Ragamuffin Band - Rick Elias, Jimmy Abegg, Mark Robertson and Aaron Smith.

"Here's what sparked the making of the record," says Elias, the project's producer, as we gather in a hotel room to discuss this final collection. "In the week after Rich died, we gathered together from the first night to the last night, after the Wichita memorial. That crowd seemed to grow. People remembering, laughing and crying; it was a healing time. At the end of that week, people were coming up and saying, This music should be heard." Adds Abegg, "Until that point, we were the only ones who had heard the songs."

"The songs were just incredible," continues Elias. "Had he made the record

himself, it would stand up as one of his finest. Beyond that, his audience had not had an opportunity for closure. The entire focus of the record is giving people that chance."

The Ragamuffins have been with Rich since his 1993 release with the band in the title. According to Abegg, in many ways The Jesus Record is the culmination of their experiences both on A Liturgy, A Legacy and A Ragamuffin Band and Brother's Keeper. "[Liturgy] was a planned attack. That record was, architecturally speaking, well made. Rich was a fabulous writer, and we would piece together an arrangement as a band that made all the sense we could muster."

Brother's Keeper was a different scenario. Abegg continues, "Rich came to town with 10 songs: This is it, you guys are producing, which meant nobody was producing. Rich had exactly two weeks to do the record. It was the opposite of what he meant it to be. The record suffered in the making, not in the design."

So, for two years Rich planned The Jesus Record; from the beginning Elias was appointed leader of the production. "Two weeks after I heard the demos, we were to start pre-production," Abegg says. "We were going to work together on the arrangements. When I hear the newest songs, I'm stunned. I feel that the very best was about to occur; his tragic dismissal from this planet was completely shocking to me."

Rich conceived The Jesus Record as a collaborative band effort, all the players writing and singing their own songs. The design was to explore the person and meaning of Christ. "He wanted it to be an intense challenge to us," Robertson says. "He was trying to get us to consider something he thought we needed to explore. He told me he thought we all needed a rebirth."

While the original plan was that everyone would write, only Robertson's co-written "Surely God Is With Us" and Elias' "Man of No Reputation" were presented to Rich before the accident. They appear on the album; the bulk of the album is written or co-written by Rich. Exclaims Robertson, "He hit a point where he was so prolific the last few months of his life. It gives me the sense now that the flame was burning super bright because it was going to go out, although it weirds me out to say it."

Listening to "You Did Not Have a Home" and "All the Way to Kingdom

Come", songs where Rich describes the broken frailty of the human experience, it's as if he was describing himself as well as expressing how he saw Jesus. "It's a funny thing the way art works," says Abegg. "Art is a mirror of humankind at its most basic level. I listened to 'Man of No Reputation' again today; I've heard that song a thousand times, but for the first time I heard it referencing Rich. It was how he saw himself, and how he made me see him. Hey, the guy moved to New Mexico and built a hogan (earth-covered Navajo dwelling) on the dirt, and lived in a shack."

The Ragamuffins laugh at that; not even a week had gone by before he was calling them and complaining that no one would come for a visit. Rich, they say, often sought to embody new ideas in his pursuit of spirituality and faithfulness. "He never thought of something and thought, Naw, probably not a good idea," Abegg says. "He always thought, This is it and went straight for it and somehow achieved it, recklessly or not, and then he'd go, This ain't it and move on. It was uncanny. I loved that activity."

But Rich was committed to the concept and songs for The Jesus Record. Says Elias, "I honestly believe he wrote the way most great writers write - they write for themselves. I think he thought, How can I force myself to meditate on the mind of Christ for four months? I know, make Christ my job; I'll make it my gig. Beyond that, he extended to us this assignment and challenge. Early, I heard one of the songs and said, That's a hit. He looked at me and said, I don't care if it's a hit, we've got to do this. And I, of course, felt like a moron. Just saying that, I was missing the point."

When it came to recording, time spent in the studio wasn't a wake. "People may find it hard to believe," admits Robertson, "but it was fun to arrange this record. We had a good time doing it."

"They weren't morose sessions," agrees Elias. "I know he wouldn't have wanted that. On a record like this, there was a lot of work involved. Being able to do that enabled us to relax and have some fun in there. There were a few emotional moments, but they were far fewer than I would have imagined."

To many, Rich Mullins had become a spiritual icon, with monk-like attributes. "I believe Rich hated the person he had become in the minds of many," Abegg says. "He was starting to put his foot down, and Brother's Keeper was the first time he did. It was his intention to live all of the multiplicity of his life in its fullest. It's not like Rich picked any of (his

success), it picked him."

While fans may have put him on a pedestal, Rich acknowledged his humanness with band-mates. "A tangent on the St. Rich thing," adds Robertson, "the fact that Rich was messed up in some ways glorifies God more than anything. That weird paradox that was Rich really shows God's amazing goodness. I don't pretend to know God's thoughts, but you get the sense of a character like Jonah that, despite himself, God - whether Rich wanted it or not - wanted to use him for something exceptional. That doesn't deify Rich, it points to the grace of Christ."

"And he was getting bolder as he got older," Elias says. "You reach a point when you can overcome the desire for approval, when you get to the point where this is the right thing to do. Rich was getting to that point. We were seeing a guy coming into himself."

"Rich was in mid-career, that needs to be said," suggests Abegg. "He wasn't wearing a seat belt. He died in a car accident. He was growing as an artist. He had a lot he wanted to say."

"Aaron said this perfectly the other day," Elias says. "People are starting to realize we lost something pretty incredible. We didn't just lose another talented writer; we lost a very significant person."

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Serena Haneline

Home is the place we long for, our ultimate destination. If we have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord, Heaven is our home. It eases the shock of losing poet and songwriter Rich Mullins to know that he's reached his home. He left behind not only a legacy, but a challenge: to live for Christ alone.

Rich Mullins: Home is a full-color limited edition book full of memories, both in words and pictures. Included are nearly six years' worth of columns Rich had written for *Release Magazine*. He used the outlet, outside of his songwriting, to further express his musings on faith and life.

"Rich had a way with words," writes Jim Dunning, Rich's manager, in the book's introduction. "A collection of writings seems an appropriate tribute."

The columns, originally published between Spring 1991 and December 1996, included his deep thoughts, provoking spiritual questions, and timely spiritual advice. Rich spoke of our God and His blessed Son with the same gravity, passion, and directness as he did through his music.

A brief biography is included in *Rich Mullins: Home*, giving readers a glimpse of how Rich lived, and how through his 10 albums we can watch his growth as an artist and songwriter. The scrapbook section includes candid photos and assorted quotations that reveal Rich's soul and casual wit. Readers will also discover such interesting facts as Rich's "hidden talent," the word or phrase he most overused, and the worst part of staying in hotel rooms.

In an article reprinted from *Release*, friend and longtime producer Reed Arvin shares how Rich "broke all the rules" to tell the Truth: "If Rich Mullins were better adjusted and better behaved," he writes, "a lot of art would not exist in this world, and a lot of truth would still be unspoken."

The book is beautifully illustrated throughout with the intimate photography of Ben Pearson, a friend of Rich for many years. The photos display Rich at different points of his life and career - a touching glance of the simple yet impassioned life Rich lived.

Rich Mullins: Home is a tribute to the art and to the man. But, more importantly, it's also a challenge for believers to take the stand of faith and live for Christ alone.

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ReleaseExtra Interview with Roberta Croteau

 kidbrothers.net/release/extra1.html

He drives around town in a 1966 bright red Chevy pick-up he's dubbed "Ruby". Today, the outside is spotless. Inside, well ... let's just say, you're likely to have a few Diet Coke cans roll out when you open the door. There are pieces of his days strewn across the seat - a few pens, books, and papers. A gym bag tossed in for good measure; some cassettes and a raft of sheet music. The spare tire lying in the back is flat. If I was more of an archeologist I could probably read Rich Mullins' whole life in this truck.

But then again, there isn't much left to dig up on Rich Mullins. He pretty much lives his life out in the open and is painfully honest and up-front as any friend, colleague, or fly-by-night interviewer could tell you. If he has any secrets, you'd never know it talking to him. The proverbial open book, he flits easily between thoughts about his life, his fears, his music, his politics, his friends, his loves, and his aggravations - it's usually open season on anything ... anytime, anywhere.

Today his conversation centers around a not-so-new revelation in his life. "It seems," he confesses, "that I always am and always have been an outsider. I've never really fit it." As he says this, a car rolls by, honking, with a friend frantically waving. Two minutes later, the scene repeats. It would seem that "fitting in" in hometown Wichita hasn't been a problem.

As he turns the corner nearing home, though, I'm beginning to see how this man really is a study in contrasts. At thirty-eight years old he still sometimes seems like ten, with a boyish giggle and disarmingly impish grin. Almost everything seems to hold a child-like wonder through his eyes. Other times ... he's old beyond his years - a tad cynical, a little burnt-out and worldly-wise. He does a marvelous impersonation of a classic red-neck. Sometimes, though, it's more frightening that it is funny.

His attic apartment is surprisingly neat - and modest. A guitar and dulcimer lean against one wall, some low, crammed bookcases sit under a window that overlooks an Anytown America suburban neighborhood; deep blue walls with some scattered Indian art and a white gabled ceiling envelope a

decidedly small living space. You probably wouldn't guess that this was the home of one of Christian music's most successful song-writers (remember, he penned Amy's mega-hit, "Sing Your Praise To The Lord," along with "Doubly Good To You" and "Love Of Another Kind") or the working abode of the artist who's brought us "Awesome God," "Sometimes By Step," "My One Thing" and over seventy other tunes that are indelibly etched in Christian music's short history. I don't suppose I expected a guy like Rich to live in a posh penthouse kinda place, but still, it was a striking scene. You just don't always expect someone to live as simply as they sing. You just don't always expect to come face-to-face with the real thing...

These days Rich finds himself a student again (working on two degrees at once, no less) and remembers that school the first time around was where this "fitting in" thing all began. "I was always too religious for my rowdy friends (they thought I was unbelievably hung up," he laughs, "and too rowdy for my religious friends (they were always praying for me)". Growing up had its good times though ... Mullins was brought up on a farm in Indiana, the middle son between two older sisters and two younger brothers. He speaks wistfully of his childhood, remembering scenes and moments like a southern writer spinning yarns on a back porch. There were lessons learned while collecting eggs, his daily chore. The family's tree nursery taught him how to identify any kind of tree by its bark - a talent he can still demonstrate today. He recalls the day he watched with his father as a fox wandered amazingly close to the house - something very rare from this usually shy animal. To carry the theme of the hour, I asked him if found he was the "artsy-creative" kid amidst a farm family that maybe didn't buy into the whole creative process. He's quick to point out that his father was probably one of the most imaginative people he knew. "Farming takes amazing creativity. Unless you're rich, you have to figure out ten different uses for one tool. And not only that, but farmers have to understand agriculture, economics, mechanics ... everything just to survive. My creativity in my family is unique in that it's a real non-practical, fantasmical kind of thing - but then that's what music is. People can live without it - but why would they want to?"

Indeed. He laughs again when we talk about his music and his conflict today. "Some people think I'm a real art freak 'cause I kinda do enjoy a lot of cultural junk. But art freaks tend to think I'm a garish and unsophisticated flake. See? I'm never 'one of the group!'" He continues, "I never know if I'm a commercial writer or an art writer." The rest of us would probably think

that's a nice middle ground to live on. After all, as an artist, Rich Mullins has managed to earn much respect as a serious poet-musician type, while at the same time garnering amazing commercial success. Not many creative people, whether within Christian circles or out, have managed to find the best of both of those worlds.

His eyes light up like a kid with a great idea ... "Sometimes I think I'm going to do something so artsy, all those art types are gonna fall down and worship me." Then, he roars, "I think I'll write an album that sells so many copies they can't print them fast enough." He settles, back in his chair and rolls his eyes, smirking. "The long and short of it is I would do both those things if I had the ability. Sometimes I forget that I'm vain and I start to think I'm being treated unjustly. And then I remember, no - this isn't a matter of them not recognizing your genius. This is a matter of you putting too much stock in it."

His self-awareness is uncanny. His self-depreciation is hysterical to listen to. Beyond all that though, there is something almost surreal about this man. Watching him, listening to him, knowing him, you almost begin to believe that maybe God actually does use mortal man as a conduit of His grace. Rich is as human as they come. And maybe his admitting it, is what makes the grace of the God he talks about that much more tangible. I ask him what's next? He sighs, and stares at the ceiling for a moment...

"I'm not sure I have anything left to say. Of course I always feel that at the end of every album. I always go, okay, that's it. I've kinda already said everything. Then all of a sudden I go, no, I want to say this - I forgot to tell you. So you run back in and make another album..."

We can only hope that that trend will continue. For four years now he's been dogged by rumors, largely self-inflicted, that he's leaving the music business. The truth is, he's not sure himself whether his future will put the kibosh his music career, or just slow it down. He's one year away from earning both his degrees in music and in education, and expects to then begin teaching music to children on an Indian reservation in New Mexico. They're waiting for him to arrive even now. For a man who's been haunted by being an outsider, perhaps this will be his greatest challenge. Most of the kids there probably won't even know that their teacher once played his songs for close to half a million fans and that his albums are in thousands of homes around the world. I have a hunch they'll just see him as the guy who came into their world and taught them to love music and to see God.

He once, in a song, described his parents as having "worked to give faith hands and feet, and somehow gave it wings." In one short decade he's managed to give faith wings to a listening audience through his transparent life and compelling art. I can't imagine him giving his students any less.

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Another Mile Farther Down the Road

↑ kidbrothers.net/release/extra2.html

I couldn't describe a "typical" day of touring because I've never had one. There is a "routine" - get up, drive, set up, play, to the hotel, etc... - but it varies quite a lot.

Early AM - You normal get up somewhere between 7am and 9am - depending on how far the next city is and when you have to arrive there. My early mornings are a lot the same whether I'm at home or somewhere on tour. I wake up, thank God I have another day, swig out the last couple sips of warm coke left from the night before and go get coffee.

I know the great saints do a lot of praying in the morning. I'm a total flop in that department. I'm more like a Zombie than a saint in the morning. People think I'm being quiet but I'm really just dead - there's a big difference.

I like to get up in time to have breakfast. I love Truck Stop breakfasts especially - cheesy omelettes and greasy potatoes and buttery toast (wheat is my preference), waitresses are quick with the coffee and never fussy. I hate restaurants where waiters have too much style and your plates have more finesse than food. Nothing kills an appetite like a garnish on your breakfast plate.

Late AM - People often ask how you get "quiet time" in the midst of the hectic schedule you have to keep on a tour. It's easy for me - I ride with Beaker. Since we both enjoy driving, we take turns. And since we both enjoy quiet, we don't interrupt each other's silence unless we think of a really good joke or see a really interesting landmark.

While Beaker drives, I usually watch the scenery or read. In the past I've read Confederacy of Dunces, The Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All, A Prayer for Owen Meany, several Tony Hillerman mysteries - I tend to gravitate towards either "Isaiah" or one of the Gospels out of the Bible. One

year I read *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* which was a mistake because it really made me antagonistic toward my predominantly white American audience and my completely white American self. I have to watch because I really get into books. This year I'm reading Hans Christian Anderson and *The Jungle Book*.

I love the way the scenery changes. It varies subtly from state to state, county to county. Kentucky barns are so different from Wisconsin barns. In the South, you get those beautiful, stone slave fences - on the plains there are hardly any fences. The lay of the land and the things people build on it all seem to be saying "don't miss this - this is a one-in-a-million scene."

It's in that quiet, too, that all the garbled, frantic feelings and thoughts begin to settle, and slowly you begin to see the shape of the love of God. You're in a truck where you can't do anything but sit and listen and occasionally talk. You can - if you choose - worry like crazy about stuff that you can't do anything about, or you can let go and enjoy the ride. The quiet, the still, small voice of God, the scenery, the freedom of this helpless moment where you have no opportunity to be a Martha - just this privilege to sit like Mary.

Early PM - A lot of times - not as much lately, but still, some - we go to a bookstore or a radio station in the town where we're playing. For two years, we did both things in practically every town we were in. It really keeps you hopping and as I'm older now, I hop a little less.

Once in town - if we don't go to an interview - we go to the concert site and Beaker and the other players change strings and tune gear while I spend a couple hours looking for the stuff I lost in the first couple minutes. If our dogs are with us, we run them...

The "crew" usually has most of the stuff up and ready to go. They drive ahead early to do it - they certainly get the short end of the stick. I can't tell you how much difference their work makes in the tone and all of a concert. If their work goes well and the place is cooperative, the whole thing is pretty easy for all of us. I like to look in to see what I'm in for that night.

A lot of times I run while they're finishing the set-up. Running energizes me somehow and gives me an hour or so outdoors. It also keeps me out of everyone else's hair.

If I don't get lost on my run - and several times I haven't - I generally get back and we all take a meal together. (A great Christian tradition began in the first Century and perfected by the Mennonites and other rural congregations.) We almost always eat buffet-style and it's a time of a lot of joking around and enjoying each other. It works - all of it - to rebuild us.

Oh - I forgot about sound-check - which is what we do before we eat. During a sound check, you do a couple songs or parts of several songs to see if you can hear yourself over everyone else. This is a tedious time for me - well, it is for everyone. It's just the rest of the band hunkers down and does it and I complain.

The Concert - So, this minister came in one time before a concert, and after about 3 minutes of quiet he said, "Well, do you guys want to pray?" We all felt stupid for him because we were praying already.

For us, prayer is not a pump-up session. It's not a way of getting our "heads into the show." Prayer is a grace through which we pour ourselves out before God and through which He calls us into His presence. If it is anything other than that, it is not prayer - it is the practice of magic.

There are two guidelines that we try to follow in these sessions of corporate prayer: one is that we pray honestly. The other is that we pray unselfishly. These two "goals" or "guidelines" are pretty highly idealistic. When we are most gut-wrenchingly honest, we generally reveal how utterly, completely selfish we are. When we are most selfless, we are most apt to be drawn into praise. So, in our prayer times, along with quiet, there tends to be a lot of asking God to keep us from impeding His best work and thanking Him for the privilege to be a part of it.

Then the concert starts.

There are nights when you go out there feeling already ground down to nothing. After hearing yourself night after night, it's hard to imagine that anything you'd have to say would be worth listening to.

But this is what you drove all those miles to do. This is what you left home for. This is why you practiced and studied and worked out the boring details. This is why you sound checked. No matter what a concert might mean to an audience, it is the payoff for hours of work for the performer. That is why it's so important to you that it goes well.

People often ask me if I get nervous before a concert. Well - I don't. I get excited - kind of anxious and thrilled all at once. You can't dwell on the possibility of forgetting lyrics or missing cues or singing into a dead mike. You naturally think of them, but it's pretty self-defeating to let those things occupy more than a minute of your thoughts.

A concert - and this is what you have to think about - is, at worst, an opportunity for you to show off. At best it is a chance to share some of what you've been given. The best that can happen is that someone can catch a glimpse of the glory you're hinting at. At worst you will make a fool of yourself. Well, I've bombed so many times that the thought doesn't scare me. I mean - you bomb, you get over it.

But occasionally you get a sense - you hear a story or get a letter - that someone really did get a glimpse of what is bigger than your little concert. And you remember when you first glimpsed Him yourself and how, once a person encounters the Almighty they never get over it. Suddenly the worst at its worst is not as bad as the best as its best is good. Then you remember that line of Paul's - the one about being more than conquerors - and you know that the ego cannot win.

At its best and at its worst - and for now the two are still mingled - this is the audible fruit of my life. Hopefully you can taste the fruit of the Spirit in it. Hopefully you can hear the Voice of God above the noise of our best attempts at imitating it. Hopefully you will be strengthened, encouraged, and challenged to walk more closely to Jesus - that you will leave the concert refreshed and maybe a little more in love with Christ.

Who wouldn't love getting to be a part of that?

Late PM - A lot of times we can't leave the concert site until 12:00 am or so. Everyone else is rolling cords, packing up instruments, loading gear. I spend a good 45 minutes to an hour trying to find my shoes, whatever book I may have taken in with me, my billfold, my guitar ... it looks a lot like someone filmed the day and is playing it backwards at a fast speed.

A lot of nights I go to sleep after about a half of a chapter and about 3/4 of a coke. It's good to know that it'll be there to finish up tomorrow.

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In & Out of a Ragamuffin's Diary

↑ kidbrothers.net/release/extra3.html

It is just now 1:05 am and as good a time as ever to start yet another journal. My life is awfully good at present. Someday I may be too old and tire and mean-spirited to think that, so I must write this day down now so that I can look back on it when they've put me in "the" home and remember that this was real...

...there's only one lamp lit in my room. The light is soft and nice in here on these blue walls and white gabled ceilings, on this paper and these sheets, soft and nice like the sound of that one dog barking half a block away. Florida beat Nebraska tonight while we watched. It's weird how much I enjoy watching sports on TV when I'm around other people, but how I'd never think to tune it in when I'm alone. It's weird what is social and bonding and is something altogether other than what it is...

...and tonight I am pretty toasty under these sheets even with the heater off and the window open. But tonight is not yet half over - today is still an embryo sleeping in this womb of darkness (gee - that's dramatic) and I am slipping away. My eyes burn a little, my shoulders ache, my neck is stiff, and my head feels heavy. This is - in some weird way - a good way to feel after you've cleaned and walked and eaten and played and watched football and laughed and rested and imagined.

Now I will read a bit more in Matthew. Yesterday God told Joseph to marry Mary, to name her Child, and to take them to Egypt and then to take them back to Israel. I wonder if Joseph's life was simpler when he was single. I wonder if he missed the quiet life or if he was (as St. Ignatius said) "indifferent" to all nature...

Today I bought a far nicer cello than I can reasonably justify owning. And I registered for classes. Tomorrow Beaker and I are looking at guitars. Tonight I went with friends to dinner. I loved being with them. Sometimes I just do and it has nothing to do with why I should. It goes beyond that - it comes from behind door #2 and it's better than any deal I ever made. "I want to shout your name out loud, but I shout inside instead..." That's a

Bruce Cockburn line. It's true too. And I'll tell you what else... I spent a lot of money today with school and the cello and all. I spent all day spending money only to come home to the best life possible which has nothing to do with money...

There is something comforting in going to bed with your bags packed. There is something reassuring in seeing your clothes folded and sorted and knowing they're clean and that tomorrow, when the alarm goes off, they will be there exactly as you left them. And whether or not you are quite ready for your trip, your clothes are.

...And then there are those clothes - laid out - not folded, to be worn tomorrow. They are draped across the little straw trunk from China with socks and underwear on top, then your shirt, then your sweater, then your pants. And when you finish showering you will dress from the top of the heap to the bottom and from what's nearest you to what's nearest everyone else. All that's left to do after you shower is put your toilet kit in your bag, grab your instruments and get to the airport.

...It's great to leave when you have so much to come home to and so much to go away to see. A person couldn't be happier on Venus, and heaven will be good when my body is folded neatly and tucked into a little hole. It's just that for now, I'm the one who gets to do the packing...

...Now I have to go to sleep. Tomorrow night we will be in another city, if our plans are honored. I did not read the Bible today. I am not very good at being religious and don't really feel too bad about not being too good. I do wish that I loved God and His creatures more...

At the "Y" today this one guy who is usually very friendly talked a little bitterly about how I seem to have it so good. I suppose I do, although I sometimes feel like it's more than I can handle. I guess the grass is always greener... I think I would envy me too, if I didn't know me better...

Tonight I cannot talk to myself. Oh, Lord, You alone can comfort me. Tonight, not only do I find this world frightening - I am frightened of the evil that I am capable of. I am frightened of that which You (I believe) would deliver me from, and yet I will not let go. Help me to let go, Lord. "Deliver us from evil..." You taught us to pray. Maybe this fear is part of the lesson. Deliver us from evil - from moral duplicity and weakness, from laziness and spiritual complacency, from those lies we tell ourselves from our fear of

facing the truth. I think, Lord, that we're all afraid of werewolves - not afraid of being destroyed by one - afraid of being one...

I need to get to sleep. I think I should write at my desk since it's so hard to have good penmanship in bed. Bed is not a place where penmanship usually counts for a lot. I guess it's kind of a sad commentary on my life that it should count in mine...

...it is a beautiful night out - a good strong moon, stars, a beautiful black sky and Wichita all lit up under it. I listened to "Adagio For Strings" tonight. It is a beautiful sound, and maybe I will sleep tonight for certain. And maybe I'll feel rested in the morning, and maybe I will someday write something as beautiful as "Adagio...", something as beautiful as this night. And if I had a child, I'd tell him to let these things speak to him as I cannot speak, and to see in them what cannot yet be seen in himself, and know that a day is coming when the night will envy his beauty and when "Adagio..." will sound like a theory assignment compared to the sound that he will be. One vibrant, shimmering answer that silences the noise of proud skepticism.

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The Other Side of the World...

↑ kidbrothers.net/release/extra4.html

Is Not So Far Away

January 9, 1994

It's 9:35 pm. We're in Bogota, Colombia - a much nicer place than I expected it to be. It's been raining since we got here...

January 10, 1994

...We visited a Compassion project today - a very nearly desolate facility full of very happy little kids who are faced with some terribly dire situations. It makes you wonder why we distrust Jesus' words in Luke: "Blessed are the poor..." Of course, the longer I go, the more I wonder why I doubt any of His words - or His mercy or His goodwill, His love for me, His faithfulness. No one should talk too much about anything until they're 80 or so, and I'm afraid that I am more apt to talk and less able to learn than most.

I am tired again tonight - a good kind of tired. Some aches are well earned. I wish I could see the sky tonight. Today with those kids, with Juan and Alexander and Wendy and multitudes whose names I of course can't remember, I saw part of the sky. Even in spite of the skepticism that persists behind my eyes, their eyes were so infused with faith and with love and hope that I could see (if only passively, second-handedly) beyond this wee little world into that vast invisible one where rulers and principalities exist. It was something to see. It was something!

January 11, 1994

Columbia juts up from the ocean like the head of a very proud horse, and is covered with green. The rains fell again today and covered everything with a shine. Bogota was like a polished jewel under the sky where night was already setting in. It's cool here - a very fine climate. I don't know how it is

when I'm not here, but it's been beautiful for these three days.

Today we saw the district where the street kids hang out. It's unbelievable what their lives must be like. There is no desperation in their eyes - only a hideous, sick vacancy that makes them look like withered ghosts or the shadows cast when a ghost passes under a moon. There's no life left in these kids. They would envy ghosts if they had energy enough to envy. But they look like machinery more than like me - like things driven. It was awful to see.

Of course, I'm sure that the same gloom haunts the eyes of millions of businessmen, well-dressed entrepreneurs, BMOC's. Why are they so less threatening than these? They may not mug a passerby, but they would sell the soul of everyone living to buy a bar of French-milled soap. Then they would scrub their faces to look good at the funeral. This world is full of the damned. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Beaker took on the sponsorship of three more children at the project today. He is the original bleeding heart and I thank the Lord for that. It's so easy to get hard. Though it is the meek who will inherit the earth, though it is the pure in heart who will see God - it takes some great strength to be anything like pure or meek. And the witness cloud must applaud his steps - every one of them.

Tonight we all went for a walk in that rain that shined up the streets of a "safer" part of Bogota. We looked at books and leather goods and pottery and ended up at Shakespeare's - this great coffee-house/bookstore. We drank some cappuccino and then the power went out and we laughed and laughed like emotionally overcharged people will when they are tired - and eucalyptus trees stand a mile over their heads and hold themselves with a certain peace-and-quiet beauty.

January 12, 1994

Today we are in Calli, Colombia. Today began about 19 hours ago in Bogota. The van to the airport was about 20 minutes late. At 5:45 am, who cares? The flight from Bogota to Calli was beautiful. The mountains down here must be built on springs - they seem to shoot straight up - or maybe they've been cut real deep.

Calli is not a particularly beautiful city. A little boy sang for me at the first of

the two projects we visited. This project was in a not-so-good part of town. The second project was in a really bad area. They look too small and too old for their ages - these children. Too much poverty, not enough bread.

January 13, 1994

The drive to Buena Ventura was spectacular. These mountains rise so steeply and the grasses and trees and flowers are so rich and colorful. Nothing makes me feel as inadequate as trying to put language on what I saw today.

The little huts on the roadside had split bamboo siding. There were goats grazing along the road and goatherders on bicycles. Men driving wedges through slate and carving bowls and spoons and forks out of comisa wood with machetes - sitting on one-legged stools under bamboo huts, over piles of wood shavings. There were beautiful vacation homes, chalets, Thai-style cottages, Tudor mansions. There were little suspension bridges over a fast running river. There half-shadowed people sitting in the doorways of shacks, watching the trucks and buses blow by. There is no way that I can guess what they are thinking.

But in Buena Ventura, the people were gracious and even graceful. They had features that were all their own. Of course, people down here are generally smaller than the people back home and less "soft". They do not have "bigger" builds - they look sinewy and their faces seem gaunt - not spooky gaunt - gaunt like Lincoln looks gaunt. They stood in the nearly suffocating heat with absolute composure and peace. While we sweated and were instantly weather-weary, they seemed, not oblivious to it, but accepting of those conditions and possessive of a resolute dignity. There is a beauty in them that struck me in a place I did not expect to be struck - in a place I did not know I had.

January 14, 1994

Tomorrow morning at 6:30 we will leave this hotel for the last time, by 9:30 we will be leaving Colombia. This evening we all went back to Shakespeare's - the coffee shop, and did the male-bonding thing. Bogota is very lively - there is a lot of pedestrian and automobile traffic. It's not rowdy, exactly. It sounds like people cut free of their week-long ball and chain and keep each other company. I like the sounds of this Friday night. It sounds like it should. I'm no idiot - I know that beyond this noise there is darkness -

that beneath this laughter there is something empty. But I know that beyond this darkness and beneath that void there is a sun that's gonna rise, there is a day that's gonna dawn and that some will escape into its light. So the sounds seem ironically appropriate.

Tonight while we ate dinner with everyone, we laughed because the din is dissolving. We laughed because our somber faces would not hasten the time - they could not hold it off, so they broke into the kind of reckless hilarity that is fitting for those who belong to a day not yet born, to a home not yet visited, to a world being prepared. "The wind blows where it will..." We have only to thank the Lord for causing it to blow our way. Oh, Lord, "Thine is the glory..."

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Reed Arvin

Rich's career-long producer shares 10 years and 7 albums worth of friendship and music making memories

Secrets. That's what has drawn me to Rich's music, and it's what holds me there. Rich tells us his secrets, and in so doing he tells all of ours. He speaks the unspoken. He gives the silence a shape. Out of thin air, words come that touch us in places that we have kept hidden, even from ourselves. For seven years and seven records Rich has been telling us his secrets, fighting with God and friends and the devil right out loud in the harsh light of day while we looked on, safe but mesmerized. We were made a little braver while we watched.

Sometimes I had to look away, locked in a recording studio with this impish, damaged, terribly brave man while he put on his gloves and battled with his faith. Sometimes it was just too close to home, watching him try to let his passion out and control it at the same time. I could see it was like trying to let the air out of a balloon a little at a time - it's possible, but it takes a lot of concentration and it tends to get away from you and end up flying all over the room in a frantic burst. That's why there is never anyone in the studio when Rich sings except the two of us, and if he could figure out how to get me out of there he would do it. It's a private thing, and even while recording I feel like I'm eavesdropping. But safe on the other side of the glass, secure in my easy Christianity, I listened. For seventy-two songs I listened. I heard the fury of a pheasant's wings. I believed that the wind would stir. I laughed at Beaker's bike. I worshipped an awesome God. I saw the wood shavings on the floor of a Carpenter's shop. I went to the land of his sojourn. I heard him singing, and I knew that he was telling my secrets, our secrets, pushing us and prodding us to finally admit with him that we can't get along without God, to just stop pretending, and get on our

knees.

Anyone who has ever listened to a Rich Mullins album will perhaps not be surprised that they are not made in the way that most records are. They come to life in travail, like a human child. Only one of them was easy, and that was the first; but perhaps the passage of time has only made it seem so. The records are terribly flawed and terribly glorious. They are full of painful imperfections and surprising joy. Like Rich, they are not safe.

It began in 1986 when we were shoved together by fate to work on his first album. I had only seen Rich once before then. He was standing backstage at an Amy Grant concert, wearing a big overcoat (it wasn't cold) and looking on bemused while I was onstage playing keyboards. I remember that I stared at him. Afterwards, we didn't speak. It would have been a remarkable thing to have known then how many roads we would eventually travel together.

The first record we made at Gary and Amy's house, and they effectively let us move in. Gary was building a home studio and we were the lucky guinea pigs to try it out. Amy made soup, and Rich and I made a record. We had absolutely no idea what we were doing, and listening to the final product is now a little painful. We cut all the lead vocals in three days, because we didn't know any better. All the same, you can hear Rich boxing with God, and you can hear him sing:

*When I leave I want to go out like Elijah
With a whirlwind to fuel my chariot of fire
And when I look back on the stars
It'll be like candlelight in Central Park
And it won't break my heart to say goodbye*

Pictures in the Sky is my favorite Rich Mullins album. It's not the best - that title easily belongs to The Ragamuffin Band - but it's still my favorite. We knew little more than we did the first time, but again it didn't really matter. It was enough to be there in the studio when he sang the words,

*When the sky is crossed with the tears
Of a thousand falling suns
As they crash into the sea
Can I be with you
Can I be with you*

Pictures is the album where Rich first shows us his elfish sense of humor. "What Trouble Are Giants," "Screen Door," even the title song - they all refused to take themselves seriously, which is a bit of an art form in this business.

Little did we know that our lives were about to change. A sturdy few had managed to wander out of bookstores with the first two records, but not enough even to ensure that another Rich Mullins album would ever be made. I sometimes think about how different my life would be if Rich hadn't played me a certain rough cassette tape in 1988. It was recorded on a boombox in a church service somewhere, and on it was the song "Awesome God." I don't know if the hair on the back of my neck actually stood on end, but I do know that I wanted to record that song more than anything else in the world. The rest, as they say, is history. But it still sobers me a bit to think how close it was to never being made at all.

Never Picture Perfect was the first record we fought over, so it's the first time our friendship made any difference. Rich was still telling his secrets:

I can still hear my dad cussin' He's working late out in the barn... Now they've stayed together Through the pain and the strain of those times

He was still being funny, too: who else would name a song "Alrightokuhhuamen"? It looks vaguely Egyptian - as in the 'tomb of alrightokuhhuamen.' And he made a prophecy, as much for him as for us:

Set aside your pride and your anger too... You can argue with your maker But you know you just can't win

In 1990 I went to hear Rich live. I had heard him many times in concert, and each was as different and unpredictable as he was. This time I had the hair raised on the back of my neck again. I heard a thousand people singing at the tops of their lungs:

And the eagle flies, and the rivers run I look through the

night And I can see the rising sun And everywhere I go I see
You

I knew my life was going to be changed again. For five months I looked at the world as best as Rich could remember it. It was the hardest thing I've ever done. It seemed like it would never end, recording two albums at the same time. But who else could take us from the whimsy of "Boy Like Me/Man Like You" to the passion of "The Howling" to the worship of "Sometimes By Step." I heard what became my favorite Rich line:

*And oh I could play these songs 'til I was dead And never
approach the sound that I once heard*

I understood then, after six records and sixty songs, that that was what it all came down to: Rich is always looking for the sound he once heard, the music of the spheres that is still hidden. It lives just on the edge of his mind, and so he keeps on digging, rolling all the dice on every song and sometimes watching the dice roll right off the edge of the table. He flinches a little with pain, and then he's ready to dig more and share harder. It's not that it's not scary for him to be so real. It's just that he is haunted by that sound, that music that refuses to reveal itself, flirting like a woman who refuses to be captured.

Then came The Ragamuffin Band. It was recorded in a different manner - everyone playing at once, with all the musicians almost becoming co-artists with Rich - and it was made hundreds of miles away from home, in Indiana. While we're telling secrets, I might as well say that I didn't want to do a record that way, and neither did the record label. Nobody wanted to do it but Rich, and after a good deal of arguing he got his way. He was right, and we were wrong. It represents the collaboration of some very talented people, and it's music made the old fashioned way. It's funny and noble and penetrating. It's the best thing I've ever been lucky enough to be a part of. It's classic Rich:

*Surrender don't come natural to me I'd rather fight You for
something I don't really want Than to take what You give*

| that I need

Ragamuffin is the best lyric writing Rich has ever done, which is like saying it's the finest diamond in a deep, fruitful mine. Every new record gives me my new favorite Rich Mullins song, and for now it's "Here In America," but only until he records again and writes something even better.

So we come to today. As I write this, I can't help thinking that a good bit of my life is scattered around me here on my desk in the shape of seven Rich Mullins albums. I can hold them all in my hand quite easily, and they seem small to have traded so much of myself for. But then I remember:

| *I'll carry the songs I learned when we were kids I'll carry the
scars of generations gone by I'll pray for you always and I
promise you this I'll carry on, I'll carry on*

Carry on, Rich. Carry on for all of us who don't have quite enough courage or quite enough art to say what you say and dream what you dream. Stay caught in the reckless, raging fury that they call the love of God.

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Plymouth, Michigan Concert Review

↑ kidbrothers.net/transcripts/plymouth.html

Temple Baptist Church

August 15, 1997

[I Will Sing]

(cheers & applause)

[Sing Your Praise]

(applause)

Thank you so much! (cheers)

This is a song that I wrote over in Amsterdam because everything is legal in Amsterdam. And I needed to do something to beat that. So I wrote a song.

[Hold Me Jesus]

(applause)

[While the Nations Rage]

(applause)

Well that one I wrote for Hillary's village, but this one I wrote for the sky...

[If I Stand]

(stops before last chorus of song)

Were some of y'all singing?

(cheers & applause)

Well, it sounded beautiful. You just ought to sing out a lot, 'cause I love to hear it.

(finishes song with audience singing)

If I stand...

(applause & cheers)

[Screen Door] ('Cup Song' version)

(cheers & applause)

Thanks so much! We're gonna do a couple of songs now that you might not have heard because they're from a musical that I wrote with Beaker and with Mitch, and I guess some of you have probably heard rumors that we started a religious order... (laughter from audience) (Rich chuckles) and they're probably true! Because the truth is, we'd all like to be Franciscans, but we don't even have the guts to really be Catholics. (laughter from audience) It's hard on you, but I do love, as Mitch and Beaker do, Francis of Assisi. And I don't know if any of you know this or not, but he is considered to be the grandfather of the Renaissance. He's the guy that invented religious poetry and acting in the Western world, and many, many other things. And there are so many ways to describe him.

G. K. Chesterson in his biography of Francis said that the really amazing thing about Saint Francis is not that he was an ecology lover, that he loved nature. It's not that he was a great believer in imitating the Gospel, or living in poverty, or practicing chastity, or in his thinking. What's amazing about Francis of Assisi is that he was simply a man who fell in love with God. And when he fell in love with God, everything in the world changed. And so we were thinking that maybe if we fell in love with God too, that it would have the same effect. But that hasn't kicked in yet. (crowd laughs) So we decided to write a musical because we'd kind of like to turn more people on to Franciscan spirituality, because there are components of that that are very much missing in our Evangelical world view, and we have a lot to learn.

And so we decided to reinvent him, and take him out of Italy and put him in the American West. We realize that's kind of hard to do with Italians. We decided to take him out of the 12th Century and put him in the 19th because a lot of people consider the 12th Century a dark period of time, as if the 19th Century wasn't. (laughter) We decided to change his name from Francis to Frank for all the homophobes out there. (laughter) So we turned

a 12th Century saint into a 19th Century cowboy and wrote a musical, based on the life, and the events in St. Francis' life. And hopefully reflecting his ideas and his values, and hopefully it's in a more fun thing than a lot of the books that you read about Francis, which are so serious, and so forth. He had such a colorful life, it's amazing that writers can do that.

So we're gonna do two songs, because we have the cd available. And you're only the second audience that we've had the cd available for, so get it quick! On the cd, there are four singing parts in the play. The part of Frank is sung by Mitch, and he will sing his own parts tonight. The part of Ivory, who is this fleshpot friend of Mitch's, was sung by Kevin Smith of DC Talk. We thought it was appropriate for him to be a fleshpot. (laughter) Michael Tait sings the part of Buzz who is a former slave, and Leigh Bingham Nash of Sixpence None The Richer sings the part of Claire. And so we're going to do two songs. The first song is the song that Frank sings when he realizes that to say 'yes' to Jesus, it necessarily means that you must say 'no' to everything else. And the second song was based on Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Sun, only we changed it to...

Mitch: "There You Are." (laughter) Big difference.

[Heaven Is Waiting]

(applause)

[There You Are]

(applause)

(playing slow piano intro) Well, it's that time of night, folks, when I'm gonna ask hundreds of you to come forward and... sing another This Train song. (laughter)

Mitch: I guess you decided to sit back down!

[Hope] (Mitch)

(applause)

[The River]

(applause)

I would like to thank, we have five people who are signed up for Compassion, for their work on the Reservation and throughout the world, and we want to thank you for that especially. We're, uh, just about out of gas here, and we're way past Richmond (laughs). So I guess my, in some sense maybe my grandpa made it to Detroit. At least to Plymouth. (applause)

It's so funny to think about, you know, I remember when I was real little, living in some place called Arvin {sp?} Indiana, and it was a real blast, because I think there were twenty people living in Arvin, Indiana. And there were, at least a third of them lived at our house. And half of the rest of the people living there were related to me. The other half were related to the Peters. And everybody got along real good because in rural Indiana you have to get along because there ain't that many people, and if you don't make friends with your neighbors you'll be awful lonely.

And then we moved out to the farm, which was in a different county. And one time when I was in the first grade - I was very serious, I have always been very serious, just down right morose. (laughter) I had gone to school and I was very proud that I was a straight A student. I'd never made anything on my paper besides an A. The problem is that my first grade teacher was best friends with my mom when they were kids. (laughter) My mom knew all kinds of dirt on her. (laughter) It's another great advantage of growing up in rural Indiana, everybody treats everybody nice because we all know too much. (laughter)

Anyway, one time I got confused about what my assignment was, and I did the assignment all wrong and I got an F on my paper. And I was scared to go home, because I thought I had failed. I thought, oh man, I'm gonna get a whipping. I'm probably gonna get a dozen whippings. I'm probably gonna, I'm probably gonna get whipped every day for the rest of my life. Which it was pretty much that way anyway, but at least not over an F.

So I snuck on a different bus. I waited for the bus to leave to go home, and then I snuck onto bus 13. Bus 13 went out to the county line. And when we got into the yard to park I could get off the bus and I could walk up to my great-grandma's house, my great uncle and my great aunt. All these great people lived out there. (laughter) I went on up to my great uncle's house. He had a boy named Jim who was absolutely my hero. I wanted to be just like him, because he was a jock. He got all the girls. That's why I like the

Beatles so much. (laughter) When I was a kid I knew, man, I don't have a shot, 'cause only jocks got dates. The Beatles came on Ed Sullivan and women were fainting-- (laughter) and then I wanted to be a musician. (laughter)

So, Jim's mom used to give my mom his clothes when he outgrew them. So it was pretty neat when I was big enough to wear them, you know, 'cos we didn't know we should be ashamed about wearing hand-me-downs. We thought it was really cool. So I went up to their house, and I remember my Great Uncle Glen sat me on his lap. Of course I was crying. I said, "Oh, I failed, I failed!" He said, "Oh? So, did you fail first grade, or did you just get an F on a paper?" And he explained to me that I had to make a bunch of F's before you actually have to take first grade over. And then I was so embarrassed I'd been so upset over something so silly. Then he told me all about some of his failures. He told me about things that he regretted - things that didn't work out. This whole time I was just sitting on his lap. Then he told me about some of Jim's failures, my hero's. And I felt so 'good', by the time he was done, I flunked second grade, (laughter) to see my hero afraid of failure.

You shouldn't be trapped in the failures of other people, you know? Some of you are so scared of going out, you go hang out with anybody. But you ought to go out there with God, He listens, and listens 24 hours a day.

You keep your television on, you surround yourself with friends, but you're scared of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom. Never lose your reverence for Him. God is nothing to be joking about, but perfect love casts out fear.

What I want you to know about God is, He ain't waiting to whip you. All God's wanting to do, right now He's ready, you don't have to wait, because what He wants to do, before you can even get to His house, He wants to run out and wrap His arms around you, take you up and swing you around in the air. He wants to take the ring off His finger and put it on yours. And then He will call to have the fatted calf killed. I don't know what He'll do with those ridiculous vegetarians. (laughter) But He is not nearly as hung up about cholesterol as we are. (laughter) He knows something is going to kill you, He figures it may as well be something tasty. (applause)

Friends, don't be afraid to go home. The Heavenly Father is waiting. Not because He wants to give you a whipping. Not because He wants to rub

your nose in your failures, but because He had a Son who was a composite failure. He had a Son who tried to have this great ministry, had thousands of followers. His Son chose for Himself, He had twelve people on His staff. In three years' time He had managed to alienate every person in one way or another. He died His Father's Son, stricken with grief, so overloaded with guilt that He had to look away, His Father could not look at Him.

He knows what it's like. He wants you to come to Him.

[Sometimes By Step]

(applause)

[Creed]

(applause)

God bless you all! Thank you very much!

(applause, cheers)

Ok, while you're up, you may know this song, so sing loud if you do!

[No Not One]

(applause)

[I'm Gonna Sing Sing Sing]

Transcribed by Sandy McMullen

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Lufkin, Texas Concert Transcript

 kidbrothers.net/transcripts/lufkin.html

[Information on ordering your own copy of the Lufkin, Texas Concert Video](#)

Well, I'm gonna start my part out with a hymn on account of how people don't sing 'em no more.

[Nothing But the Blood of Jesus]

["Nothing but the Blood of Jesus" video clip \(2.3 MB\)](#)

[Awesome God]

Thank you very much, I hope you like this song too!

[intro for Brother's Keeper...]

(Rich's guitar is out of tune with the rest of the band, so Mitch comes over and adjusts his capo)

I hope I can play it better...

[...Brother's Keeper]

[Rich playing guitar out of tune video clip \(1.4 MB\)](#)

Thank you very much. Well, this is a song that we wrote about... we were wrestling with the idea of the incarnation. Doesn't that sound heavy and theological? And thinking about, you know, the apostles especially, being good monotheists, what it must have been like for them to meet Jesus and have Him say that He was God and how that must have weirded them out. Because it kinda weirds me out - that someone could be fully God and fully human, but that's I guess the way it is. Not only is it weird that God should also be a man, but thinking about God being a boy was even weirder. Just imagine if He ever played baseball, you know. Like if Jesus was God and if God is all-powerful, if He was gonna play baseball, just how many windows do you think He might've knocked out around Nazareth? And who was gonna make Him pay?

[Boy Like Me/Man Like You]

(Rich messes up the whistling part badly)

"Sorry, I won't even try that again."

"...stories like that make a man walk straight..."

You ever seen one of these before? This is a lap dulcimer.

"I really may just grow up, and be like You..."

It was invented by Irish immigrants over here in this country in the coal mining area called Appalachia. Just thought I'd share that with ya.

"...some day."

[Lap Dulcimer Instrumental]

[Lap dulcimer instrumental video clip](#) (2.2 MB)

Well, that was a song I wrote for my dad, he was Appalachian. This is a song I wrote for a little girl who wasn't supposed to get born, 'cause the doctor said she would never survive the birth. She was born and a couple days later, he said, "Well, she won't survive the week." She survived the week, and a month later, he said, "She won't live a year." And now after about sixteen months, she weighs twelve pounds finally. I think Madeline prays for us all.

[Madeline video clip](#) (2.1 MB)

[Madeline]

[78 Eatonwood Green]

["78 Eatonwood Green" video clip](#) (1.6 MB)

[Calling Out Your Name]

[Such a Thing as Glory]

Thanks.

Well, this is a song that I did not write, and I wish I would've, but Dougie MacLean got to it first. Which is what I think writing is about. I think it's about fishing. I think you just have to sit on the water with your bait in there long enough and maybe something will bite.

He's a Scottish... are you all familiar with Dougie MacLean? Anybody a fan of his? He's a great writer and a very important Scottish folk artist. And being Scottish, he's almost Irish.

They just didn't get far enough west, I guess.

I loved the song when I first learned it in Cincinnati. I learned it from a band called the Willoughby Wilson Band. But after I went to Ireland, I loved it even more because this is a song about the sea. I don't know if you've ever seen the west of Ireland and the North Atlantic - it's a very stormy, tumultuous sea, very wind-tossed and romantic and scary. Romance is about as scary a thing as there is, I guess.

And the Irish have always sort of traditionally been afraid of going out to sea. Partly because of the North Atlantic and partly because they've traditionally been very bad at building boats. But the soil in the west of Ireland isn't sufficient to sustain them, so they had to go out. So the men would go out, and their wives and mothers would wait for them to come back. Often times by the time their bodies washed back up on the shore, they would be so disfigured that they couldn't tell one husband from the other. Which is a problem I think a lot of Irish women have even if their husbands are alive.

You know, people go to Ireland, and they come back and they have those really beautiful, big sweaters, real big, bulky, and they've got all kinds of stitches and stuff in them. Well, they started doing that because each of those different stitches are different charms and prayers and stuff that they would weave into their husbands' sweaters. If it worked, then their husbands would come back alive, and if it didn't, because fish don't eat wool, they could tell who was who by what sweater was on them.

I just think that's a charming story.

[Ready for the Storm]

[Babylon]

Thank you very much. That comes from one of the most confusing psalms of the Bible, I think. The Bible's okay until you start reading the psalms and then it really wigs out. All that vengeance and stuff. Of course that's the part I especially like. I know "Vengeance is mine, thus saith the Lord," but I just want to be about the Lord's business.

(cheering)

But anyway, that's the psalm... the psalm starts... I think it's 138, or 137, something like that, you can look it up. It starts out: "By the waters of Babylon we lay down and wept and we remembered thee Zion for our captors required of us songs, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.' But how can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" Which is a good question because what land have we ever been in that wasn't foreign?

It starts out so beautifully and then at the end of that psalm, the last verse of that psalm is, "How very blessed is the man who dashes their little ones' heads against the rocks." This is not the sort of scripture you read at a pro-life meeting. But it's in there nonetheless.

Which is the thing about the Bible... that's why it always cracks me up when people say, "Well, in 'du du du du du du duh, it says..." You kinda go, "Wow! It says a lot of things in there!" Proof-texting is a very, very dangerous thing. I think if we were given the Scriptures, it was not so that we could prove that we were right about everything. If we were given the Scriptures, it was to humble us into realizing that God is right, and the rest of us are just guessing.

(applause)

Which is what makes them so much fun to read, especially if you're not a fundamentalist.

(Rich laughs to himself, one lady laughs in the audience, a few others join her)

["The rest of us are just guessing" video clip](#) (0.9 MB)

I've been traveling around now for about fifteen or twenty years. Do I look like it? Everyone always says, "You look so tired - can we pray for you?" I'm like, "Man, if I didn't look tired, you should pray for me. I would've had to have made a deal with the devil to not look tired. I deserve to look this way."

I abused myself as much as possible in the last twenty years. Which is fine with me. 'Cause I figure, sooner or later, life's gonna kill us all - you may as well go out doing something you love to do. Or eating something that you like to eat, like cholesterol.

(cheering)

I've been in Christian music for I don't know how long. I grew up in the church, you know. It's hard to be in the church and not be involved in Christian music. In fact, I think the best Christian music is the music of the church. I think that's what Christian music is really about.

And the rest of it, it's so funny being a Christian musician. It always scares me when I talk to you guys and you guys think so highly of Christian music, contemporary Christian music especially. Because I kinda go, I know a lot of us, and we don't know jack about anything. Not that I don't want you to buy our records and come to our concerts. I sure do. But you should come for entertainment. If you really want spiritual nourishment, you should go to church.

(applause)

Those people care about you, and you don't have to buy a ticket. If you really want spiritual nourishment, you should read the Scriptures. It'll confuse you to death practically, but you're gonna die anyway, so why not go out doing something good?

(applause)

["If you really want spiritual nourishment, you should go to church" video clip](#) (1.1 MB)

That's one of the things I love about being single. Everybody always goes, "Ooh, you're single, what a tragedy." And I'm kinda like, well, yeah, from about 10 till 2 it is a tragedy. But that time is a tragedy for most married people as well. One of the great advantages of being single is you can still pick up hitchhikers. If you're married, you don't wanna get slit or anything, 'cuz you've got a family to support. If you're single and you die, it doesn't really matter, so you're free to do anything you want to do. I love that.

If you really want spiritual nourishment, read your Bible, go to church. And the other thing is, Jesus said that, "My bread is to do the will of my Father."

And I'm all the time being asked by people, "How do you feel closer to God?" And I kinda always want to say, "I don't know." When I read the lives of most of the great saints, they didn't necessarily feel very close to God. When I read the Psalms, I get the feeling like David and the other psalmists felt very far from God for most of the time. Closeness to God is not about feelings. Closeness to God is about obedience. It's just as simple as that.

And here's a little Bible verse that I've come to love more over the years. Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of these my brethren, you've done it unto me." Jesus seemed to have a particular place in his heart for the oppressed. I think maybe because he was Jewish.

Karl Barth was once asked, why do you believe in God. He said, "Because of Jews." They said, "What do you mean, because of Jews?" He said, "Well, find me a Hittite in New York City."

(One guy in the audience laughs, some others laugh with him)

I'm so glad that some of you got that.

(The rest of the audience laughs)

God looked down on Abraham and for reasons that we have no idea why, he said, "I'm going to bless you and your progeny and forever you will prosper," and it still goes. People have tried to wipe out the Hebrews for years and years, and they just can't do it.

I wonder if one of the reasons He liked Abraham was because Sarai was barren, and Abraham was this close to extinction when God called him. Because God seems to have a very special place in His heart for the small and for the weak and for the oppressed and the poor of the world.

I don't know how you feel close to God. And no one I know that seems to be close to God knows anything about those feelings either. I know if we obey, occasionally, the feeling follows. Not always, but occasionally. I know if we disobey, we don't have a shot at it.

Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers, you've done it to me." And this is what I've come to think. That if I want to identify fully with Jesus Christ, who I claim to be my Savior and Lord, the best way that I can do that is to identify with the poor. This I know will go against the teachings of all the popular evangelical preachers, but they're just wrong. They're not bad, they're just wrong.

(applause)

Christianity is not about building an absolutely secure little niche in the world where you can live with your perfect little wife and your perfect little children in your beautiful little house where you have no gays or minority groups anywhere near you.

(applause)

Christianity is about learning to love like Jesus loved and Jesus loved the poor and Jesus loved the broken.

Now this is a song we're gonna do in an old, traditional church kinda way, because church music goes way, way back and we have a great and rich heritage of music in the church. We're gonna line this one out. And the way we do it is I will sing a line of the song to you and then you will sing it up to God, okay? This is a prayer that would be typical of a prayer you might learn on a reservation.

[I See You]

This fall besides doing an album with Mitch, we're gonna do another Ragamuffin album, and this one is just gonna be ten songs about Jesus. And this is one of them.

[You Did Not Have a Home]

Thanks.

[I Will Sing]

[Sing Your Praise to the Lord]

["Sing Your Praise to the Lord" introduction video clip](#) (2.1 MB)

Well, this is a song I wrote in Amsterdam because everything is legal in Amsterdam.

(laughter)

And I always thought my folks just didn't sin 'cause they were too old for it. I was old enough to not sin over there (tuning his guitar and pausing as he speaks), and uh, I found that it was still very tempting. And I, uh, several years ago I used to travel by myself. I traveled by myself for several years. I had a lot of struggles at the time because it's just so hard not to watch those movies in those hotel rooms when you're by yourself - when you're alone (sheepish smile). And I was talking to a spiritual director...

[Distracted by monitor noise, Rich asks the sound crew, "Can you please turn this away from me?"]

...a spiritual director of mine, and he said, "Well, it's not that you're so bad. It's just that you're not supposed to go out by yourself." So I started traveling with other people, and when we were in Amsterdam I was with Beaker. I don't know if you remember Beaker or not.

(applause)

So I was there in the hotel room, hoping he would start snoring so I could be sure he was asleep 'cause I thought maybe I could just, maybe it'd just be fun to be tempted. 'Cause sometimes, even if you're not gonna sin, it's nice to be tempted. (laughter) And uh, he never did snore that night, and by about five in the morning I was pretty worn out. And uh, that's when I wrote this prayer, and if you want to pray it with me you can.

[Hold Me Jesus]

[While the Nations Rage]

Well, I wrote that song for the village, but I wrote this one for the sky.

[If I Stand]

[Screen Door (Performed by Rich Mullins, Mark Robertson, Cobra Joe, Mitch McVicker and Eric Hauck)]

["Screen Door" video clip](#) (3.8 MB)

Thank you so much. Well, here's a song that - A while ago Beaker, Mitch and I wrote a musical called Canticale of the Plains, and it's based on the life of Francis of Assisi, which of course, I think we wrote the musical just 'cause we like the title - and the title makes no sense in terms of Francis of Assisi. But he's still kind of a hero of ours, and so we decided what to do was to change him from being a 12th century Italian saint into a 19th century American cowboy. So we basically follow the life of St. Francis of Assisi, but we just set it in the American West as opposed to medieval Italy. And we're gonna do a couple of songs from that. We don't actually have it for sale right now because fortunately it's sold out. (applause) This is a song that Frank sings. Oh, we also changed his name from Francis to Frank on account of how Frank doesn't sound very cowboy-ish. But this is a song he sings at the end of the first act - when he realizes that to say 'yes' to God means that you necessarily have to say 'no' to everything else. So, it's sort of a commitment song.

[Heaven is Waiting (Sung by Mitch McVicker)]

[Elijah]

Bear in mind, children, that they listen to you because you are kids - not because you are right. That's how our Father listens to us. One time one of those evangelical shows wanted to have me on as a guest - TV show, you know? They wanted to check me out first because they'd heard bad things.

(laughter)

So they called me up and they said, "Well, how'd you become a Christian?" Or no, they said, "How **old** were you when you became a Christian?" I said, "Boy, I [takes a deep breath and exhales shaking his head indicating he's unsure of an exact moment], I don't know." They said, "Well, give it a shot." And I said, "I don't know, probably two or three." They said, "So **young**! What happened?" And I said, "Well, I was in Sunday School and we prayed [Rich sings] 'Into my heart, into my heart, Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Come in today. Come in to stay. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.'"

And the lady said, "Well, that's not what I meant." She said, "You couldn't have possibly been old enough to have understood what you were praying." And I said, "Lady, we **never** understand what we're praying (laughter), and God, in His mercy, does not answer our prayers according to our understanding, but according to His wisdom." She said, "No,

what I mean was, when did you **knowingly** accept Christ?" And I said, "Oh, that must have been about the third grade." She said, "So **young**! What happened?" (laughter) I said, "I said a bad word - a **really** bad one. I said the word you weren't allowed to say in front of my mom. So I knew I had sinned and that I would - had separated myself from God, so I was baptized."

And she said, "Well, I don't care when you were baptized. I want to know when you became a Christian." I said, "Lady, when I was baptized my sins were taken away and I was given the Holy Spirit. That's an awful lot like becoming a Christian to me."

(cheering)

Then she said, "What I **really** want to know is when you were born again."

(laughter)

I said, "Lady, which **time**?!"

["When did you become a Christian?" video clip \(2.5 MB\)](#)

Used to be I'd only get born again about every year - once a year. That was when I was goin' to camp. You know, every year you'd go and you'd get 'born again' again.

(laughter)

You'd go up there and you pray and cry and feel like a fool. Yes, it's embarrassing to be born again, but imagine how embarrassing it must have been to be born the first time.

(laughter and cheers)

At least this time you get to wear clothes!

(more laughter and cheering)

But, those of you that are young enough to go to camp and re-dedicate your life every year you keep doin' it, 'cause about the time you get to college you're gonna learn that you have to re-dedicate your life about every six months. And then you'll graduate from college and it will become a quarterly thing. By the time you're in your 40's and 50's you'll do it about four times a day.

(laughter, applause, cheering)

And you will **never** understand what you're doin'. But God will.

I asked my dad one time, "How did you know you were ready to get married?" And he said, "Oh, I didn't." He said, "In fact, the only reason I **got** married was because I wasn't ready. If I had known what I was in for I would have run screaming from the room."

(laughter)

And I said, "So, are you sorry?" And he said, "No, I'm not sorry at all." He said, "I did not understand what I meant when I said 'I do', but I'm so glad I said it. I had no idea that my wife was going to live this long - or what a glorious life she would give me."

And folks, sometimes we think that we're saved because of how good we are, or because of how smart we are, or how clever we are, or how much we give. All those things are in a sense salvific. God does save us through our own work. If you don't believe me, then become a Lutheran and cut James out of your Bible. But, we're mostly saved, not because of what we do, but because of what Christ did. Had Jesus not died, all the water in the world wouldn't wash away your sins. Had Jesus not taken away our sins, all the prayers in the world that we could pray would never reach heaven. Had Jesus not come down as God and become flesh, there is no way that you and I could become holy.

I had a prof one time - my favorite prof in the whole world - This is one of my favorite bible college stories. He said, "Class, you will forget almost everything I will teach you in here, so please remember this: that God spoke to Balaam through his ass, and He has been speaking through asses ever since.

(laughter)

So, if God should choose to speak through you, you need not think too highly of yourself.

(more laughter)

And, if on meeting someone, right away you recognize what they are, listen to them anyway because God spoke to Balaam through his ass, and has been speaking through them ever since."

We are not saved because we're good. We're good because we're saved. Never forget what Jesus did for you. Never take lightly what it cost Him. And never assume that if it cost Him His very life, that it won't cost you yours. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to heaven. Why? Because God has a really big house, but He's gonna have a lot of guests and He doesn't want all that luggage to deal with. If we could lay down our stuff and let God love us, I think we'd pretty nearly be in heaven. And I hope you're there. That's where God wants you to be. And maybe you didn't know that. I think a lot of us think that God is looking for ways to keep us out of His

kingdom. Well, if that were the case, then Jesus would be absurd. But, if Jesus Christ is Who the Scriptures teach us that He is, then God wants us to be saved; we know that God wants us to be with Him. This song will sound better if you sing it than if I have to sing it by myself. It goes...

[Sometimes By Step]

[Creed]

You guys are probably great singers, so I want these guys to hear you do...

[Rich begins singing It Is Well: "When peace like a river attendeth my soul..."]

["It Is Well" video clip](#) (5.4 MB)

[It Is Well - Rich enjoys listening to the audience sing. He shakes his head at the end of the song.]

You sound great. That, folks, is what Christian music is really about, okay? So don't forget about it - the congregational singing. I hope you sing a lot. It is the most reiterated command in the whole Bible - not the funnest command, but the most reiterated one. The funnest one, I think, is the first one - be fruitful and multiply. Most people I know have trouble not keeping that one.

(laughter and cheering)

The commands of the Lord are not burdensome.

(laughter again)

So go out and live real good and I promise you'll get beat up real bad. But, in a little while after you're dead, you'll be rotted away anyway. It's not gonna matter if you have a few scars. It will matter if you didn't live. And when you wash up on that other shore, even though you've been disfigured beyond any recognition, the angels are gonna see you there and they'll go, "What is **that**? We're not even sure if it's human." But Jesus will say, "No, that's human. I know that one." And they'll say, "Jesus, how do you know that one?" And he'll say, "Well, you see that sweater he's got one?"

(laughter)

Do you know this song?

[I'm Gonna Sing, Sing, Sing]

[Swing Low, Sweet Chariot]

Here's another one.

[When the Saints Go Marching In]

All right now, I'm gonna divide you into three groups here. So all you people over here on this side of me, you're gonna be Group A. You got it, Group A? (cheering) You people right to about here, you're gonna be Group B. (cheering) Y'all way down there, you're gonna be the leftovers. (cheering) Now Group A, you're gonna sing a little solo. You're gonna sing it with Eric, and the rest of us are gonna listen. Ready? Here we go. One, two, three.

[Eric leads Group A in I'm Gonna Sing Sing Sing.]

Now, you keep singing that. Group B, you're gonna sing with Mitch. You're gonna sing

[Mitch leads his group in Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.]

Now, you all keep singing that. Leftovers, you ready? Here we go.

[Rich leads the leftovers in When the Saints Go Marching In.]

Everyone on your part.

[Doxology]

[Rich starts Doxology and exits the stage. The audience takes over, finishes the song and the lights fade out.]

For more information contact: The Legacy Of A Kid Brother Of St. Frank, P.O. Box 11526, Wichita, Kansas, 67202, (316) 612-4649, kidbrothers@southwind.net, www.kidbrothers.org.

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Cornerstone '97 Concert Transcript

↑ kidbrothers.net/transcripts/cornerstonetranscript.html

[Person speaking is Rich unless otherwise noted ~~ Ed.]

Announcer: Hey, we need to give a big welcome to Rich Mullins!

(applause and cheers from audience)

Hello!

[Hello Old Friends]

(crowd cheers to piano intro into "Sing Your Praise to the Lord")

[Sing Your Praise to the Lord]

Thank you very much! Does anybody have a pick on 'em? Well, I'm having a little guitar trouble here... (strums guitar, tuning) Well, we're gonna be terribly out of tune here, I have a feeling (strumming)... But this is sort of a 'hillbilly' song so I don't suppose it really matters.

[Where You Are]

[Brothers Keeper]

All right, this song will sound a lot better if you sing along with me. (crowd cheers) And we're gonna do it in an 'old church' kind of way, we're gonna line it out. Which means, I will sing a line to you, and then you will sing a line out to God. (to the side) Could you turn my keyboard and my vocal up just a bit in the monitor so I can tell what I'm doing here?

[I See You]

That was Aaron on the drums, Aaron Smith! (cheers) And you guys sing great! And we're so glad you do. This is Jimmy Abegg. (cheers) Thank you!

Jimmy: Well, we're gonna do a song about a dream I had.

[The Dream]

Another song from Jimmy.

Jimmy: Well, I'm gonna do this song - it's kinda odd. I gotta tell ya, it's so new, that I don't really know it. I hope you don't mind. We're gonna give it our best shot. (strums guitar) This is about an alien abduction. You know, there's a new record out I want to tell you about, it's by ESA, Evangelicals for Social Action. I think it's called Demonstrations of Love, if you've heard of it. So anyway, all these friends of ours, all contributed a song to help support ESA's efforts. And this song is on it, among many others. Rich has got one, Rick, and Mark? No, Mark doesn't. (feedback squeal) I guess that might be this guitar? No, I don't know what it is. Anyway, here we go.

[Aliens]

Jimmy: He put me up to this! (pointing at Rich)

(dulcimer intro into "Calling Out Your Name" - audience cheers)

[Calling Out Your Name]

[How To Grow Up Big And Strong]

All right, here's another one you gotta sing on! (cheers) I'm gonna sing a line to you, and you answer, ok? These lyrics are real easy, they're just, "Whoaaaa" (audience answers back throughout a chorus of "whoa's", becomes intro into 'Place To Stand')

[Place To Stand]

Thank you! (crowd cheers) Well, that's a...that's a song I wrote for a wedding I never had. (he laughs)

[The Color Green]

Thank you. Well, you... Let's see, you've met Jimmy and Aaron so far, I'd also like to introduce Mark Robertson. (crowd cheers) This is the only guy I haven't introduced you to so far, but I'm gonna have to sooner or later, even though it will probably ruin my reputation. This is Rick Elias. (cheers)

Rick: Well, we're gonna have a little bit of fun for a second here, ok? You guys ready to dance? (cheers)

[Dance With Me Tonight(?)]

(intro to "That Thing You Do")

Rick: Come on, let's see you do the 'Swim' out there!

[That Thing You Do]

Rick: Well, thank you. Rich is always so generous to let us perform some of our stuff. We're gonna be doing another record up here in the fall (tuning) and the next few songs are songs that will be on that record. This is a song I wrote a few years ago. (Blows harmonica, audience cheers) We're getting there as fast as we can (directed to someone off stage). We love to sing our songs, but we've got a time limit. And we should. We should have a time limit. This song is called, "Man of No Reputation." It's taken from Philippians chapter 2, and I wrote it because the phrase stuck with me - you know, it just began to occur to me simply that the Jesus Paul is talking about is not the Jesus that is, more often than not, presented via the airwaves or elsewhere. And it wasn't the Jesus that changed my life, that I came to worship. So...

[Man of No Reputation]

Rick: Thank you very much!

(Rich begins intro on piano into "Jesus")

Here's another song we're putting on the new release. This I wrote because it's easy to look at Jesus as...as either being very imminent or being very "way out there." And, when you love somebody, you want to be with them. And one of the things that's hard in our lives, is that we're so bad at loving. So this is just a prayer.

[Jesus]

Thank you. (looks behind him on stage, calls by whistle) They're all...they've taken off and left me! (playing intro into "Sometimes By Step") This is a song I wrote with Beaker, who is a good friend of mine, and Beaker's doing great! He is now the father of two children. And if you know this one and you want to sing it, that would be great!

[Sometimes By Step]

(intro into "Creed" on dulcimer, crowd cheers)

[Creed]

God bless you all! Thank you so much! Good night!

(Ragamuffins exit, audience cheers)

Announcer: Good night!

(crowd still cheering, Ragamuffins return)

Thank you! Well, we didn't mean to do another one, because there are two things that are happening at midnight that I think are gonna be really good. One is, the Vigilantes are playing, and I don't want you to miss that. But if you do miss that, I want it to be because you go to see Canticle of the Plains. Here's a song that we forgot to do - we didn't save it for an encore, 'cause we don't normally get asked to do encores.

[Awesome God]

Thank you and good night!

Transcribed by Sandi McMullen

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Green Bay, WI Concert Transcript August 10, 1997

Green Bay Community Church

↑ kidbrothers.net/rmml/rmml209/greenbay.html

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Rich Mullins/Mark Robertson and This Train/Mitch McVicker and Band

Rich is speaking unless noted otherwise. Please overlook transcriber errors. Thanks so much to Sandy for transcribing.

{begin first tape}

(applause)

Thank you. How are you guys tonight? Well, we've got a whole lot of music to do, so we'll get started just as quick as we can. My thinking about concerts is, you know, if you want to hear music that's on records, then you should go buy the record. (laughter) So we'll be doing a lot of music that you may not have heard. We're gonna start out with some music by a guy named Mitch McVicker. I met Mitch a couple years ago, actually, probably about four years ago, and we've been good friends ever since, and I, besides being a friend of his, I'm a big fan of his, and I think when you hear him, you will be too. So would you please welcome Mitch McVicker.

[His Love Is Right Here]

Mitch: Thanks! Well, it's nice to be in Green Bay. This is

a...this is
a 'real' town. (laughs) We were, we were down in, I think it
was,
Naperville, Illinois, and that's just a bunch of strip malls.
(laughter) But...these guys are gonna switch instruments, 'cause
they know
how to play a whole lot of stuff. And...I'm gonna stick with the
guitar...(laughter)...And this next song is called 'Freedom,' and
it's about
walking by faith.

[Freedom]

Mitch: Thanks! Over there playing cello and all kinds of
stringed
instruments is Eric Hauck. Well, when I wrote this next song,
I...I
thought it was stupid. But I went ahead and I decided to play
through
it a couple times anyway, and...after that I decided that instead
it was
profound. (laughter) Because, I think that's the way it is with a
whole
lot of things in life. I think, a lot of times the silliest, most
lighthearted things end up being the most meaningful. I know that
I all
too often forget that Jesus called us to come to Him like a little
kid.
Not sure what that means, but...I don't think He was talking about
immaturity, even though, that's the part that I've got down. I
think
He's just hoping for us to depend upon Him for as much as we can,
and
trust that He'll provide. So this is a song about a guy that I'd
like
to be like someday.

[The Lemonade Song]

Mitch: Thank you! Playing percussion is Michael Aukofer. Well,

this

next song, it kind of has the same theme as the last one. And, ironically, it kind of has the same theme as every song I've ever written. Because I do get confused when I start thinking about faith

and hope and peace, and all that stuff. It just kind of seems like it's

all the same thing. Kind of like, it's just this one big ball of stuff.

And we take these words, and we attach them to these ideas and truths

that we know a little bit about, but for the most part they're just way

beyond us. So I think that what everything comes down to, and what

holds that big ball of stuff together, is love. At least that's what...that's what I get from reading the Bible, and listening to the

words of Jesus. So I keep writing songs about love, I guess because a

lot of times we like to talk about the stuff that we know the least

about. Plus I'm just in a 'rut.' (laughter) But I've been in a lot

worse ruts. So maybe, I'm thinking if I stay in this one for a little

while, that I will learn about, learn a little bit of something about

loving people, and loving God, and letting Him love me. And that might

not be until I'm eighty years old--I'm hoping at least by the time I'm

dead. But until then I'm gonna try and stick to the simple stuff. And

not get caught up in all the issues that sometimes we get fooled into

thinking we gotta take this real big stand on. And we get all that

figured out, and then we realize that sometimes we've lost sight

of
what's really important. So in my attempt to keep things simple,
I'm
just trying to remember that Jesus loves the 'hell' out of
us...literally...

(applause)

Sometimes it's weird to think that we've got 'hell' inside of us
to be
loved out. Sometimes it's hard to look at. But then again,
sometimes
it's hard to look at the 'heaven' that's within us. Because, it's
kind
of overwhelming too, when you think about it. But...they're both
there,
and I think, I think the whole spiritual realm is a lot more
'real' than
a lot of times we take it to be. I know, at least for me, anyway.
But
the good news is that, since both 'heaven' and 'hell' are real
present,
Jesus has overcome the bad, and He's the Giver of the good. And
that
maybe, maybe someday all of us will be motivated by love, to do
what we
do, by His love that's within us. So...here's another song about
love,
and it's called--it's really just kind of a statement of faith, at
this
point in my life--it's called, 'Only Love Will.'

[Only Love Will]

Mitch: Thank you! Well, ya'll have been really nice to listen,
and I
just wanted to say that if you wanted to buy any of my records or--
-I
keep saying 'records' but they don't make records anymore--if you
want

to buy any of my tapes or cd's, I don't got any. (laughter) But I'm going into the studio in a couple weeks to do my first one. (applause) And what I do have now is a mailing list. I have a 'sign-up' sheet back by all the other tapes and cd's, and if you want to sign up on that I can keep you up-to-date on the album, and the other stuff I'm doing...whatever that is...we're gonna do one more song, and it's called, 'Take Hold Of Me.'

[Take Hold Of Me]

(applause)

Mitch: Thanks. Now here is...Rich Mullins!

[Nothing But The Blood - instrumental]

[Awesome God]

(applause)

Thank you.

[intro to Brother's Keeper]

(sings) Now there's--clink in his car--and the musician has forgotten his lyrics...and the lover's got a lonely heart...

[rest of song]

(applause)

Thank you very much! Well, I have a lot of trouble with lyrics, I dunno. It's a good thing I write 'em.

(laughter)

Don't you hate it when you go to a concert, and a guy goes, you know, because, you know, a lot of times performers have those insecurities and junk, and they'll say, because they're insecure they'll go, "Ah...Now I'm going to do a little song and it goes something like this." I always want to go, "Look, buddy, I paid exactly ten bucks to hear that song. I want to hear EXACTLY what it goes like!"

(laughter)

Well, this song sometimes goes different, but tonight this song goes exactly like this: (laughter)

[first half of Boy Like Me, Man Like You]

(speaks)...tonight's version of this song does not include a pennywhistle solo. Because we thought the space would be nice, we thought you would enjoy a little 'peace,' right in this section. And I don't know how to play it yet...

[verse, chorus]

(speaks)...and it's really awkward when you sing if you're not playing something, (laughs) 'cuz what do you do with your arms?

(sings) And I really may just grow up, and be like You...

(speaks)...and then you have those long solos that you don't know

how to

play, so you're not only not singing, but you're not playing either.

And so then, you know, what do you do with your hands or your mouth?

It's a big, you know, bill to foot.

(applause)

Have y'all ever seen one of these before? This is a, for those of you

who don't know, it's a lap dulcimer, and it was invented by Irish immigrants in this country. And a good many of them ended up, because

they couldn't get jobs in Boston, because, you know, even though people

talk about religious freedom, in Boston, they were all, you know, Puritans, even after they didn't believe what Puritans believed anymore.

And the Irish were all Catholic, and so they, you know they drank, and smoked, and brawled, and had lots of kids.

(laughter)

And of course the Puritans didn't approve of any of those behaviors,

so--they wouldn't give them jobs, so they all ended up going down to

Appalachia for jobs, and that's where they invented this little instrument. It's one of the only musical instruments invented in this

country, which I think is a nice thing.

(sings) ...some day...[conclusion of Boy Like Me, Man Like You]

(applause)

[instrumental on lap dulcimer accompanied by cello and drum (title

'John'?)]

(applause)

Thank you. That song I wrote for my dad, this song I wrote for a little girl that wasn't supposed to get born. She...(feedback squeal)...what in the world is that noise, please stop that... They found out that she was gonna have multiple birth defects and so the doctor recommended she be aborted, and said, "Well, she'll never survive the birth anyway so may as well get rid of her now." Then after she was born, he said, "Well, she'll never survive the hour," and after that night he said she would never survive the next day. Later he said she would never survive the month. And sixteen months later, Madeline is still alive. (ed. note: Madeline died in March of '98 at the age of two years.) She...when she sleeps, she folds her hands like this...we all think that she's praying for us. So this is a song I wrote for her.

[Madeline]

[78 Eatonwood Green]

(applause)

(Rich laughs)

[Calling Out Your Name]

(applause)

[Such A Thing As Glory]

(applause)

Thank you. Well, this next song I didn't write...(laughs to one side) I'm really sorry about that, Jordan...I wish I would have because it's one of my favorite songs I ever recorded, but it was written by a Scottish guy named Dougie MacLean. I learned it from a band back in Cincinnati many years ago, and I always really loved it. And then I got the opportunity to go to Ireland, and it made me love it even more, because it's a song about going out to sea. And I don't know if you've ever been to Ireland. I highly recommend it, 'cos it'll make you behave better, because it's--it's a little bit like going to Heaven for a little while.

And it makes you want to get there, to stay, for a long time. But the Atlantic Ocean, the North Atlantic, is very stormy and wind-tossed, and, you know, romantic and scary, all that stuff...romance is scary, I guess...(laughter)...I've heard rumors about romance...And the Irish have always traditionally been afraid of the sea. In fact, if a guy was going to be a sailor, he wasn't allowed to learn how to swim, because the water is so cold up there that to swim only prolongs your agony. If your boat goes down you just want to drown quick, is the idea. The Irish have always been afraid of the water, probably because of the way the North Atlantic is, and also probably because of how bad they

have

always been at building boats. (laughter) And the soil in the west of

Ireland is so thin that they couldn't support themselves from it, so

they had to go out to sea to go fishing and stuff. And often they would

go out and they wouldn't come back for weeks and weeks. And when they

finally washed up on the shore, there they'd be, all, you know, deteriorated and stuff, and their wives would come down, and they couldn't tell one husband from the other. (laughter) Of course, having

been to Ireland I know a lot of Irish women have that problem even if

their husbands are alive. (laughter) So, you know when people come back

from Ireland, they have those great big huge sweaters, you know, that

have stitches and stuff in 'em, and all these designs, and stuff? Well,

those designs are based on--the wives began to knit for them these sweaters. And they would knit little charms and prayers into the sweaters. So then if the charms and prayers 'took,' then the men would

come back alive, and if they didn't, because fish don't eat wool, they

could tell one husband from the other. (laughter) You like it? (laughs)

So that's kind of what this song is about, only...

(laughter)...not really...

[Ready For The Storm]

(applause)

[By The Waters Of Babylon]

(applause)

Thank you. Well, I didn't write that song either. 'Traditional' did.

I learned it from an album I had a long time ago by Don MacClean, called

American Pie. (scattered applause) Guess you had it, too. I'm so proud

that you will admit it. (laughter) You must not have kids yet. Have

you admitted to them, how bad your taste was when you were their age?

(laughter) That's why I don't get pictures and stuff, man. We used to

blackmail my folks all the time. You know, we'd look at what they looked like when they were, you know, our age, and we'd go, (snicker)

"...and you're worried about us?"

Oh, wow. That's why I, you know--I know the Bible says that children

are a blessing, and stuff. I just have to take it on faith. (laughter)

That must be true in some sense. You know that song, "By The Waters Of

Babylon," the text is from the Scriptures, it's from one of the psalms.

I think it's one of the most beautifully written psalms in the whole

collection. Except, the thing that blows me away is that after you have

this really beautiful lament, then at the very last verse of that is,

"How blessed is the man who dashes their little ones' heads against the

rocks." (scattered laughter) This is not the sort of scripture you

read at a 'Pro-Life' meeting. (laughter) You just have to take it on

faith that it's supposed to be in there, I guess. For a long time I

couldn't understand it, and then...one Sunday I had to help out in the nursery at church. (laughter, applause) I realized then, in fact, God's ways are higher than ours...(laughter)...it's funny...people pay good money to get them. I never understood it. You spend all that money, you know, having those babies, and then they're gonna take your money from you for the rest of your life. (laughter) I suppose they would be nice, at some point...never at five in the morning. All my friends that have kids, hate their kids at night. Most of them give them drugs, to get them to sleep. "Here, kiddy, kiddy, kiddy!" (laughter) (he chuckles) That's what I love about parents. Because everyone thinks that love is supposed to make sense. Then you go, but it can't make sense. 'Cause who loves more than a parent loves their child? And that makes no sense whatsoever. All those children do is, you know, eat, and throw up, and dirty their diapers. (laughter) And their parents are so proud of it. (laughter) Especially their first one. "This is the first diaper!" Blows me away. And then you know, you go in their houses, and they've got those pictures on their refrigerators. I want to find out who invented those magnets and shoot 'em. (laughter) And they're so proud of those pictures. "Look what Aiden drew!" I dunno, what is it? (laughter) "It's beautiful! Look what a sense of color and balance he already..." And you go, man, it looks like a Picasso. And I mean

that in
the worst sense of the word. (laughter) This is not great art.
"Well,
yeah, but it's really good for a two-year-old!" Well, yes, but
it's
still not the sort of thing you want to hang on your wall, is it?
Parents are so amazing to me the way they love their kids.

A lot of people say, you know, gee, because people like what I
write and
stuff, you know, they always say, "So when you write, do you sit
down
and try to think of something really heavy to say to people?" I'm
like,
no, actually, no. They say, "Well, what inspires you?" And I
always
say, well, you know, I have a lot of pagan friends, and I talk to
them a
lot about the inspiration of the Scriptures. How as Christians we
believe that they were breathed out by God, and that they are
inspired
by God. So, if I say my songs are inspired, I think that confuses
people. Because then I think that they think that my songs should
be
canonized, and the Canon has been closed for several years now.
(laughter) So I always like to say that I believe the Scriptures
are
inspired and our songs are provoked. And then people say, "Well
then,
what provokes your songs?" And the honest answer is, bills.
(laughter)

What provokes you to go to your work? (laughter, applause) And
you
know, you hope in the course of writing something that you're
gonna say
something that's gonna encourage someone to do something good, but
man,
I tell you, there's so much great music out there, that none of us
need

to write any more good stuff. There's just more great music than we could ever listen to, if we lived to be a hundred. And it's a great, great privilege to get to do what I do for a living. And it's a great honor that you pay someone when you listen to them and I sure appreciate the way you've been listening tonight. You've really honored us, and I hope we have something to give you back.

[Compassion ad]

We're going to do one more song for you, and then we're gonna take a break. And we'll take a ten-minute break, and I really do mean ten minutes, 'kids!' Because we have as much music to do in the second half as we've done in the first half. So, we wanna...(applause)...do all that and have you get home in time to go to work tomorrow. So--we're gonna do this in an 'old church' way, we're gonna line it out, which means that I will sing a line to you, and then you all will take it and sing it up to God, ok? They used to do this before they had hymnals, and I still think it's a good idea.

[I See You]

(break)

SECOND HALF

[Like It Or Not]

(applause)

Mark: (laughs) Thanks! Well...we've been on the road, This Train, since April 23rd. Last night was the first night we've slept in our own beds since April. And...it just hit us, we're in the last week of a tour, we're kind of sleepy. It just hit us! So normally, people-- people, "Oh, you're so energetic, you're so energetic!" Not tonight. I need a nap. None of that's your problem, though. So...(tuning)...oh, that's not good...man... The guy at the store tuned this for me when I bought it...(laughter)...don't know what happened...he told me something when he sold this to me. These strings are real cat-gut, he told me. Real cat-gut. And I didn't think much of it, I went, well, that's fine. And I didn't feel bad, but...the strings are starting to come unraveled, and I'd swear it's a whisker. (laughter) And now I feel all guilty. (laughs) "Kitty..." (laughter) So...I don't think there's much we can do for this guy now, though...I have friends who think that's about the kindest thing you could do to a cat, but I'm not one of those people... Anyway, this is one of my very favorite songs of all time, and we hope you'll sing along, because it'll sound a lot better than just watching us nod off up here. And you might not recognize this particular version of this song, but once you do recognize it, please sing along.

[I Saw The Light]

Mark: Thanks! I think I just, I think I did something bad, hold on...

Are those pins at the bottom supposed to be bent over sideways? (laughter) Anyway...the guy at the store said--oh no, never mind--(laughs) Well, we, about two weeks ago our brand new record came out, we have a second cd out. No doubt news to you who didn't know we had a first cd. (laughter) That's all right. And...but...when we started writing songs for it, I was really struck by that scripture that says, anything you do unto the least of these you do unto Me. So I began to ask myself, who are, in fact, the 'least of these,' the very 'least of these.' And since we live in the '90's we hopped on the Internet and 'surfed the Web,' or in my case, 'dogpaddled' the Web, and... (laughs) I swear, the whole first month I had a computer, I just hid in a corner and threw rocks at it. (laughter) But anyway...we compiled our lists of who, in fact, are the 'least of these,' and we were really surprised to find out that it's mimes. Isn't that weird? I know, I was surprised too, but if you think about it, these are people, like, you know, without jobs, who just hang out in public parks all day 'walking against the wind' and what-have-you, hoping to get spare change from hardworking people like you and me. (laughter) And, still, nonetheless I was still surprised. So...this is our drummer, Cobra Joe. Say "hi" to Joe, would ya? (cheers) Leave 'em alone, Joe. And...so I told...and that's Jordan.

{end first tape/start second tape}

Mark: Hey, thanks so much!

[I Will Sing]

[Sing Your Praise To The Lord]

Thank you. This is a song I wrote in Amsterdam, and kind of how everything is 'legal' in Amsterdam. I always thought my parents didn't sin because they were just too old. When I was there, I was as old as my parents were when I used to think that. And I don't think I was--I guess you just think that as you live, you eventually outgrow temptation, and the reality is, you don't. You need Jesus just as much now as you ever did. That's what this song is about.

[Hold Me, Jesus]

(applause)

[While The Nations Rage]

(applause)

Thank you. That was a song I wrote for the 'village,' 'cause I don't want them to raise your children for you. This is a song I wrote for the sky.

[If I Stand]

(applause)

This here's a song I wrote for Martin Luther. Because the only place in the whole Bible where it (doesn't) say "faith only," his favorite phrase, was in James, where it said that we are not saved by faith only.

And he wanted to cut it out of the Canon because it didn't agree with him. And so he started a great Protestant tradition of just taking what we like of the Scriptures and ignoring the rest.

[Screen Door]

(applause)

Don't get me wrong, I like Martin. (laughs, laughter) Oh, it's just none of us are right about everything, are we? Which is the whole problem in life, because you kind of go, man, if only all Republicans were really stingy, wouldn't it be easy to just dismiss them all? And if only all Democrats were really 'whacked,' then we could get rid of them, too, but, you know, there's good and bad in all of us. And it all gets mixed up, and it's hard to sort it out. Which is, I guess, why we like heroes so much. I often get asked who my heroes are, and I have a good many, and I don't know any of them. And I have a feeling if I got to know any of them I wouldn't like 'em anymore.

I don't want to be too cynical, though, about things. There is one guy...I got in trouble, you know, I got a lot of 'hate mail' because of...I get more 'hate mail' than any other Christian artist probably in the

universe. (laughter) And I don't know why, because I think I'm a nice
guy. (laughter) I remember one time, though, I was waiting on my
manager. I was sitting outside this promoter's meeting down in
Nashville, and they were talking about all these different
Christian
artists, and they said, you know, what is their 'demographic'?--
that's
what they call you guys, the 'demographic'--and they said, you
know,
so-and-so, he appeals to young families, young married couples,
blah
blah blah blah. They said someone else, and they went, oh, he
appeals
to teenagers, someone else, oh, that's the college crowd. Then
after a
long, long time they finally said my name, and there was just dead
silence. (laughter) It was making me really nervous, and finally,
one
fellow spoke up, he said, "Rich Mullins...I think he appeals to
smokers."
(laughter) I felt really wonderfully complimented, (laughs) to
tell you
the truth. Don't you get sick of health freaks? I always want to
say,
look Bud, you're gonna die anyway. You may as well go out eating
something that you like. (applause) What is the point of living
to be
a hundred and fifty if all you get to eat is bean sprouts?
(laughter)
I'll never understand people, I'll tell you...

Anyway, one of my heroes, I cited as being my hero, was Francis of
Assissi. And I...when I was a kid I saw a movie called Brother
Sun,
Sister Moon. It's available in a lot of video stores, and I
highly
recommend you get it. You just have to ignore Donovan's
soundtrack.

It's very 'dated' and corny. But if you get past that, it's really a wonderfully made film. It's by Franco Zeffirelli. And I tried to play it for my nieces and nephews and stuff, because I think that they need heroes and all that, too, and they can't get past the soundtrack. So...(laughter)...so I thought, I'd like to try to rewrite the soundtrack for that movie, and send it over to Franco and see if he'd re-release the movie with a, you know, what I would consider a great soundtrack. And then I went, you know, there's no way, you know, it just wouldn't work. So I decided, Beaker and I decided to write a musical about Francis of Assissi. Only we decided instead of having him be a twelfth-century Italian saint, we would change him into a nineteenth-century American cowboy. And just basically follow the course of his life, which is played out in the American West instead of twelfth-century Italy. So we've written it, it's called Canticle Of The Plains, and it will someday be available in some form. At this point it's lost, and we're not sure where to find it. (laughs) But on the recording, I don't know if you're familiar with DC Talk, but Kevin Smith and Michael Tait sing two of the parts. And then, Leah Bingham Nash of Sixpence None The Richer sings the part of Claire, because she's the most Claire-like person we could think of. And when I met Mitch in college, I went home and I said, "Man, Beaker, I just met Frank. I met the guy who is exactly what Francis would be like if he were a nineteenth century cowboy instead of a twelfth century saint." And so,

he sings the part of Frank on the tape. And we're gonna do one of his songs tonight. This is a song of dedication that Frank sings when he realizes that to say 'yes' to Jesus means that you necessarily have to say 'no' to everything else.

[Heaven Is Waiting]

(applause)

Well...(piano intro to 'Just As I Am')...it's now that time of evening when we're gonna ask hundreds of you to come forward and...listen to yet another This Train song.

Mark: You've been a very polite audience so far, so why don't you get over it and hop on up for a second...this is kind of just an old hillbilly gospel 'stomp your hands, clap your feet,' 'marry-a-relative' kind of song...

[That Great Atomic Power]

(applause)

And here's another song from Mitch.

[intro]

Mitch: Y'all are clapping good! This song's called 'Hope.'

[Hope]

(applause)

Mitch: Thanks!

[Bound To Come Some Trouble]

(applause)

Thank you all so very, very much for coming out tonight, you've been really great to play to. We've never played in Green Bay before. Thank you for having us. I hope you'll have us back.

(applause)

It's always funny to try to figure out why people come to hear, you know, what you do. 'Cause you, um, I get so bored with it. One thing that gets me through 'Awesome God' is when everybody else sings it, you know. And I think it's a really good song, I ain't saying it ain't. Just so happens I like a lot of stuff I write. I always resent those guys who don't like what they write, then I kind of go, "Then please don't burden me with it."

(laughter)

I think you ought to like what you do. Because there's a reasonably good chance no one else is going to.

(laughter)

I think a lot of what we do is kind of like what my friends' kids do, you know. Angels probably, I've just got a feeling like God's got

this
great big refrigerator up there in heaven, that's just covered
with what
we do. Angels come by for a drink or something, and they see all
the
junk on His refrigerator, and they go, "God! What are You
thinking! You
own the cattle on a thousand hills, surely You could afford a few
good
pieces of work!" Then God goes, "Ah, I know. But my kid made
that."

Picasso said that good taste was the enemy of great art. I think
he was
right. Especially given the art that God does when we offer up
the
'junk' of our lives. And He turns that into something that is
beautiful
to Him.

And you know what, not only do the angels sometimes probably think
He's
'whacked'--sometimes you and me think He's kind of gone a little
'off
his nut' too. Because we're going through our lives, and we're
trying
as hard as we can, and things just seem to always blow up in our
faces,
and we keep going, "God, God, why?" We don't know what He's
doing. So
just let Him do it. If you really believe He's good, then let Him
do
it.

People always say, "I don't know where the Lord is leading me." I
always say, it don't really make a whole lot of difference. The
important thing is to be where He has led you to already. If He
has led
you into a marriage, then be faithful there. If He has led you

into
being single, then be faithful there. If He has blessed you with
many
material goods, then be a good steward of those goods. And if He
has
blessed you by allowing you to imitate His life of poverty, then
imitate
it with great joy.

Someone once asked Mother Teresa if she thought that we didn't
suffer in
the United States like other people did because we were a
righteous
nation, and Mother Teresa said, "Oh, no, I'm afraid you're so
wrong."
They said, "What do you mean?" She said, "I don't think you
suffer
because I don't think you are worthy to suffer."

Don't resist the work of God in your life by asking for an easy
life.
If you live really good, folks, you'll get older. I guarantee you
that,
you will get older.

It's amazing to me to see pictures of my grandparents, when they
were
kids, and how handsome, and pretty and everything they were, and
bright
looking. And then seeing them when they were very, very old, I
never
would have connected the two. Life had beat them beyond
recognition, in
many ways. They had arthritis, they had cornea dystrophy.
Eventually
they died, and we all are gonna do that sooner or later.

And if you live really good, you will be beaten. If you really
try to
walk in faith, you will fall. You will stumble. If you believe

that
your life in Christ is one constant spiral upward, then you are
badly
mistaken. And if you think it's heretical to say, then read the
lives
of the apostles. Their lives were blemished, their track records
were
not particularly good.

If you try to have faith, you will be attacked by doubts you never
knew
you were capable of. But you keep on believing, even if you fall,
even
if you struggle with doubts, you keep on believing. And if you
live a
life that is marked by hope, by the belief that God is good, and
there
is goodness in the world that awaits us, you'll be disappointed.
You'll
be crushed, even, sometimes. The Scriptures say hope deferred
makes the
heart grow sick. You're gonna have a sick heart. But you keep on
hoping. And if you choose to love, you will be misunderstood, you
will
be betrayed, you will be rejected by the people who most
desperately
need the love you have to offer. And remember that when you try
to
love, it's not like love in the movies. In the movies, when
people are
loving each other physically, they always are perfectly fit and
tan, and
beautiful. Most of y'all, I've seen you, you don't look like
that.

(laughter)

We are blemished people, and in order to love anybody, in
any way, we have to expose that part of us that we'd rather keep

hidden. Our own selfishness, our own fears, our own hangups, and it's embarrassing. So humiliating. But you keep on loving.

Many of us are obsessed with becoming rich, many of us are obsessed with becoming smart. But all of our wisdom, all of our great insights, we see in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect comes, that which is in part is done away with. But there are three things that will remain: faith, and hope, and love. Make sure you live in those. And if you do, you will be hurt, you will be crushed. But when you wash up on that other side, when life is done with you, when you wash up over there, then angels that were looking at your little works of art and saying how tragically misconducted they were, they will look at what's left of your body and say, "Man, what is this!" And Jesus will say, "Oh, I know who that is. They are mine!" And the angel will say, "How do you know he's yours?" And Jesus will say, "Well, you see that sweater they've got on?"

(laughter)

"I knit that for them."

[Sometimes By Step]

[Creed]

(applause)

God bless you all! Good night!

(applause)

[No Not One] (sung acappella)

(applause)

Do ya'll know,

[I'm Gonna Sing, Sing, Sing]

[Swing Low, Sweet Chariot]

[When The Saints Go Marching In]

Ok, now I gotta divide you into three groups to do the rest of this song, so you people over there in that section, and you people over there, way over there in that section, you're gonna be Group A. You people here in this section, Eric pay attention. These people over here, this is Group B. (cheers) And you guys right here, you're the 'leftovers.' (cheers) Now before we get into this, I want to say one more thing to ya--and that is, the people that Christ came for first were the 'leftovers.' (cheers) And Jesus has a special place in His heart for the oppressed, and I hope that we won't forget about them. I hope that you will go back and look at the Compassion stuff. I hope that you can become part of a wonderful ministry, and that you will know

the joy of being a part of that. Now we're gonna sing, so Group A,
you're going to sing with Mark and with Mitch, you're gonna sing,

[I'm Gonna Sing, Sing, Sing]

Can you hear 'em? Group A, c'mon, you gotta sing louder than that. You
just keep singing that, sing louder.

Group B, you sing with him (Eric).

[Swing Low, Sweet Chariot]

Hey leftovers, are y'all ready? I'm gonna sing with you, we're gonna sing,

[When The Saints Go Marching In]

All right! All together I want to hear you singing,

[I'm Gonna Sing, Sing, Sing]

Thanks again! One more song, it goes:

[the Doxology, 'Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow']

(applause)

{end}

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Wheaton College Chapel Service

↑ kidbrothers.net/transcripts/wheaton-college-apr1197.html

Wheaton College Chapel Service

Wheaton, Illinois

April 11, 1997

Steve Ivester, Assistant Director of the Student Activities Office introduces Rich:

"For the past three months, I've had the exciting opportunity of being closely acquainted with Rich Mullins. Mostly this has been in the context of producing his recently written musical, 'Canticle of the Plains,' which is a story based on the life of St. Francis of Assisi. This musical is being premiered next Friday evening during part of his concert, and that's here in Edman Chapel.

I liken my opportunity to get to know Rich almost as an opportunity to glimpse through a pinhole toward the extraordinary land of Oz. There's so much color there, yet there's only a small scope of time in which you can gather it and ask about the vividness you're peeking at. And just as an encounter in Oz leaves you-or the visitor-changed forever, a session with Rich leaves you with a fresh focus. You almost find yourself repeating, not "there's no place like home," but "there's nothing like holiness." In my interactions with Rich, I've found that he is funny and serious; he's quick to point out his own humanity, and he's surprised when you spot something lofty in him. Undoubtedly Rich Mullins is infectious awe-filled about the God he loves, laughs, writes, and sings about. Please welcome to our chapel program Rich Mullins."

(Applause)

[Sing Your Praise to the Lord]

Rich Mullins: (takes sip of water) "Thank you. Everyone always says you shouldn't drink milkshakes before you sing... and I didn't... I just think morning is worse for you than milkshakes, so if you have your options, I would rather be hoarse because of a milkshake than because of morning, if you want to know the whole truth about it."

[Here in America]

Rich: "Well, I have a couple of announcements I need to make. First of all, the Men's Glee Club is going to be playing here Saturday night-singing here-and uh, I have a ticket, so there must be some seats left cause they surely wouldn't have given me one if there

weren't. Also, there's gonna be a Chocolate Fest at Traber (audience yells and applauds) at 8:00. But they forgot to tell me what day (someone from audience yells, "tonight"). Oh, tonight... this very night, yes. So, my understanding is this is as close to a kegger as you can have at Wheaton (audience laughs), so uh, eat up. (Rich laughs.)

So it's really-this Internet thing is really upsetting to me because uh, people write in stuff that I say in concerts, and, you know, I don't have a computer. In fact I barely have a phone. I can't get a credit card, you know, because you have to have touch tone, and where I live, we just got touch tone-always before, it was that pulse dial thing. Which takes longer to dial, but that's OK because where I live there's not a whole lot to do anyway. So you-it's kind of fun to punch a bunch of nines and just see if you can count as they pulse by (audience laughs).

Anyway, so-you know, people, I think, used to think that I was real spontaneous and stuff because I-I come off as if I don't really know what I'm talking about. Which is-I do that to disarm the heathen, you know. They don't get all defensive if they think that you're just a bumbling idiot. And uh, which is part of my charm (grins). But then you know, these people write in the Internet and say what I said and then the people at the next concert say, wait a minute-you know-he just said that a week ago. So, you know, I had a panic attack actually and uh, decided, oh wow, I've got to come up with, you know, several different things to say because if I don't, everyone will know I'm not really as spontaneous as I appear to be. But, then I realized that that's why pastors are so boring is because we hear them every week, and they're always trying to come up with new material. And, I think everybody only really has one sermon in them, if you want to know the whole truth. Everybody only has one song in them-all songwriters. That's the thing that cracks me up when people say, well, all his stuff sounds alike. Well... yes... duh! Try to listen to a couple hours of Mozart. Which I've never gotten is, why is it that a few people in Austria a couple hundred years ago got to decide what was gonna be classic? And what is classic rock? And what is alternative music? I don't get that either. Like how can it be alternative. You know, the minute it's accepted, it's not alternative anymore. And rock can't be classic. These are all things that disgust and disturb me.

So yeah, but you know, I'm at an academic place so I need to speak highly of serious stuff. Although I have trouble with serious stuff, I have to admit, because I just think life's too short to get too heavy about everything. And I think there are easier ways to lose money than by farming. And I think there are easier ways to become boring than by becoming academic. And I think, you know, the thing everybody really wants to know anyway is not what the theory of relativity is, but I think what we all really want to know anyways, is whether we're loved or not. And that's why I like the Scriptures, because you get the feeling from reading them that we might be. And, if we were able to really know

that, we wouldn't worry about the rest of the stuff. The rest of it would be more fun, I think. Cause right now we take it a little-so seriously, cause I think of our basic insecurity about whether we're loved or not. And uh, you know I think you should study because your folks have probably sunk a lot of money into this. And uh, it would be ungrateful not to. But your life doesn't depend on it... that's what I loved about being a student in my 40's as opposed to in my 20's, is I had the great knowledge that you could live for you know, at least half a century and not know a thing, and get along pretty well. So all that to set up this song, which is really not one of my favorites, but that's why you work that hard at setting it up (audience laughs).

[The Love of God]

(in the middle he stops... "joy and sorrow are this ocean... " "Oh no, that's not the words... hold on one second." Stops and mentally goes through words. "OK, it is the words..." Laughs and finishes the song. Giggles.

"OK, I'll do a more recent song, cause I might remember it better. It's the closest thing to a love song I've actually written in the last several years, because I don't date anymore, so I don't need to write many you know love songs cause... they never worked very good anyway. But uh, let's see, this is-it always worries me, you know, listening to Christian radio, occasionally you get a little worried about how, uh, if you were really tuned into that stuff all the time, it would warp you... (applause) and, uh, I became alarmed at the lack of good break-up songs on Christian radio (laughter). It's as if we were all part of Focus on the Family or something. We didn't do that. So uh, me and Beaker decided to write one, and it's really hilarious you know, because of this Internet stuff-you know, I get all these letters now from people trying to console me over my divorce. I'm going, geez, I haven't even had a date in a decade, how can I get a divorce? so, it's not really a personal story, it's you know-it was just an exercise-we decided to try to make it hard for the other guy to rhyme, and that's how we wrote it. But anyway, they played it on the radio, so it must be OK, so it goes, uh, boy I'm having a hard time this morning. I'm not a morning person. You may not know this, but musicians generally tend to be nocturnal. And the world is set against us, so we do our best to adjust, but this one goes, uh,

[We Are Not as Strong]

(applause)

Well, that's a little grimmer than most stuff I write, but only because the grim stuff doesn't sell well, and people often ask what inspires songs, and I always hate that because you know, I have all my pagan friends and you try talking about the inspiration of the Scriptures, and I think when you just throw the word 'inspired' around loosely like that, it

becomes very confusing to them, so I always like to say that my songs are not particularly inspired-the Scriptures were inspired-my songs are provoked. And I know God gives a lot of people their songs, but you know I hear a lot of those and I understand why He gave them away (laughter).

I've never gotten this Christian thing about always blaming God for everything. God told me to do this or do that. Well, gee it's a shame that you're so stupid He had to tell you to do that. Just seems like the sensible thing for you to do. Why don't you just do what makes sense and stop waiting for God to tell you to wipe your nose when it's running. But there's a lot in the Christian culture thing that I don't think I get, and it's made it kind of awkward because I've been really pretty successful overall from Christian audiences. But I don't know why cause I don't think I get all this stuff. And I was-you know, I think I was raised Christian, but once I left home I began to find out how unchristian my family was. Cause we-I think our big problem was my folks underlined all the wrong passages of Scripture. And none of the right ones. Like the born again thing, which is a total crack up to me. Cause Jesus only said that to one guy one time. And then there was that whole born again movement. You know where everybody said you had to be born again. And I was going, 'why, am I Nicodemus?' What happened to the passage that said, 'if you want to follow Me, give up all you've got and give it to the poor and take up your cross?' Do we all have to do that too?

The Bible is such an interesting book to me, because it says so many things that you can't really follow it all, I don't think, can you? So I guess that's why God invented highlighters, so we could find the parts we especially like and mark them up and just follow that, cause I think if you follow any of it, you're doing pretty good, except for the part-my favorite part-did you know the most reiterated command in the whole Bible is the command to sing? Now there must be a reason for that. And uh, that's why I sing. I don't really enjoy it, I think it's hard work. I like writing, but I sing because I figure if you find a command that easy to follow you should do it a whole lot. Cause the rest of them are kinda rough, except the first command, the one to be fruitful and multiply. Most people I know have trouble not keeping that command. That's the thing that cracks me up about you know, proof-texting too. Everyone's proof-texting this book about Christ and Christ Himself said, you know, You search the Scriptures to find life, and you're not gonna find it there. But no one underlined that part, not even my folks, because we live in a time when we have come to believe that there are answers... and I don't know why we believe that. And even more worrisome, is I'm not even sure why we ever came to believe that questions are all that important.

I love when Jesus was-you know, in Mark-in all three of the synoptic gospels in fact-the story of the rich young ruler comes right after the story about Jesus blessing the children. I think there might be some significance to that. And Mark, who is briefer than the other

writers, includes 3 details in his telling of the story that the other 2 guys left out. And in case you're not familiar entirely with the story, it goes that Jesus was blessing little kids. You know, I'm trying to think through this thing and I'm going, well how do you bless children? Cause I find them barely tolerable, let alone something you'd want to bless. So I'm thinking I've got all these nieces and nephews and stuff, how have I blessed them, and the only thing I could think of is, you know you pick them up and you throw them as high in the air as you can and you catch them right before they splat. Or, you get down on all fours and you know, they ride you and you try to buck them off, and that kind of thing.

So I'm trying to picture Jesus doing this and then the disciples they come up and they see Jesus who-you know they're good monotheists so they're really I'm sure struggling with His claims to be equal to God. And they see Him you know, and they're kinda going, well you know when you put on that really straight academic face of yours and charge us with a lot of information, we can kinda buy it then, but here you're acting like an idiot. And it's hard enough to believe that smart people could be the Son of God, let alone this-this-bumbling idiot, that's rolling around in the dirt with the children. And Jesus says, 'hey guys, knock it off. If you want to come into My kingdom, you have to come in like one of these. You have to come in like a child. You have to let me throw you up in the air and catch you right before you splat. You have to ride on my back and let me buck you off. We have to wrestle a little, we have to play a little.'

And there's this guy who's a great student and probably a politician-the rich young ruler. And he's standing by, waiting for his big photo op because that's what politicians do. And he's doing what all students do during lectures-he's trying to think of some great stump the teacher question. Some question that would be so impressive to all of his peers that they would all go, man you're so smart to have thought to have asked that. So Jesus just gets done saying 'you have to be a little child or you can't come into my kingdom,' and then this guy goes up and asks the stupidest and most repeated question in the history of Christianity-'Good Master, what must I do to have eternal life?' And, uh, Mark then says these three things I find amazing.

First of all, I find it amazing that Jesus had just answered his question before he even asked it, and it wasn't about what you do, it was about what you are. Jesus had just said, 'if you want to come into my kingdom be a child,' and who doesn't find it easy to be a child. I mean what else are we gonna be? And this guy was so arrogant that he didn't listen to God when God spoke. But Mark tells us something about God in his telling of this story that I find amazing. He says that Jesus looked at the man, which says this must be the beginning of the good news-that even though we're so arrogant that we don't even listen to God, God is so humble that He looks at us, that He takes note of us. He's not impressed by our questions and by our answers, but He's quite taken with us. And having

looked at the man, Mark tells us that He loved him, which I find amazing. Cause this guy was using Jesus as a photo op. And Jesus loved him. And after He had looked at him-after He had considered him-and after He had loved him, then Jesus told him what to do, if there was such a thing. And the thing that I find wonderful about what Jesus told this guy was, I have a feeling like his security was all wrapped up in his possessions. And so He told him to get rid of his possessions-something He didn't tell Nicodemus to do. And I have a feeling maybe Nicodemus was all wrapped up in his religious heritage, and in his genes, and Jesus told him to forget it and be born again. Cause maybe it's more important that we know Jesus than anything else in the world. And maybe all our questions, maybe all our answers don't amount to a hill of beans. But they're fun to ask. And it's always impressive to have an answer even though they don't ever amount to much. Sometimes we think that Christianity will be communicated when we become really intelligent or really articulate. But Christianity is communicated the same way diseases are-it's communicated through touch, through breath, through life, not through information. And Christian vitality does not come from having a great head, but it comes from being connected to a great God who really is life, and uh, that's what I more than anything wanted to say to you this morning. So thank you for listening. I will play another song now.

[If I Stand]

Thank you all for listening, you're dismissed.

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[Return to Calling Out Your Name](#)

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Upland, Indiana Concert Transcript

↑ kidbrothers.net/transcripts/upland.html

Taylor University

September 21, 1996

(applause)

[I Will Sing]

[Hope To Carry On]

(applause)

(tuning guitar) Thank you very much. This is a...really fun to be here tonight. We gotta tune a little bit. I don't know why I try to tune, because I'm pretty tone deaf. (laughter) But people, professionals do this. So I'm (laughter) is something wrong with that one? (still tuning) Can you tell this is out of tune?

(voice from audience) Yes! (more laughter)

Rats! Well, if it bugs you, leave! (laughter) And you know I always hate people, all my friends, I mean, I have a lot of friends that are musicians and stuff, and they always tune their guitars for hours, endless hours. And I just go - (audience laughs in response to his action, he continues tuning) I think that's better. Ok anyway, this is a song that I wish I would have written but I didn't and a lot of people tell me it's their favorite song of mine. So I never tell them, under those circumstances, that I didn't write it. It's a song by Dougie McClain and it's called "Ready For The Storm."

[Ready For The Storm]

(applause, then laughter in response to his tangle with a microphone stand)

Yeah, professional musicians tune, and they don't get their guitar stuck in the microphone. Oh, well. This is a song that has this guitar part that goes:

(plays guitar lick from "Where You Are" but with considerable difficulty,) so every time we get to that part just imagine that it's happening.

[Where You Are]

(applause)

I'll do this song next because everyone always thinks I'm saying a bad word in it, but the word is 'ship.' (laughter) It doesn't make any sense that you would jump off the other stuff (laughter) so that you can walk on water. So...

[Screen Door] (piano)

(applause)

Hey, I'm gonna do a really morose song now, because this is getting entirely too happy. (laughter) And that's the reason why I'm on my way out, because, you know, you 'Generation X'ers are also morose. And I have to work really hard at being angry, like you guys can be so naturally. So I'm thinking, I'm not gonna be a lot of fun for many more years, so that's why we're charging a lot of money at our concerts now. (laughter)

Anyway, this is as angry as I'll probably be able to get. It's a song I wrote about breaking up. Because, I was listening to Christian radio one day, which is something I'm not in the habit of doing, if I have to be honest. I don't suppose I do, nobody is probably gonna drill me about it later. But I think most people just listen to too much radio, and too many records. We ought to have a little more silence in our lives, because I think, you know, it's just too cluttery, the way most of us live.

But anyway, one day we were stuck in a radio station waiting on an interview, and after about an hour of listening, I realized that one of the things missing in Christian music was good break-up songs. (laughter, applause) You know, if you listen to Christian radio, you get the feeling like everyone is part of that Focus on the Family group, or something. (laughter) So this is a song I wrote because I figure I'm probably not the only Christian who ever was fourteen, and ever got his ring back from his girlfriend. So...

[We Are Not As Strong] (piano)

(applause)

[Sing Your Praise] (piano)

(applause)

(tuning guitar again) This is a song we wrote, me, another... a bunch of these songs me and Beaker wrote. We're gonna do some songs that Mitch and me and Beaker wrote, too. (still tuning) This we wrote, just on a... I used to live with James Bryan Smith and his wife Megan and their little boy, Jacob. And Jim, I call him Jim... was working on a book called Embracing the Love of God at the time... It's published by Broadman and Holman in case you want to buy it! ...And so, me and him and Beaker were sitting out on the front porch talking about the whole thing of trying to love people and not expect anything out of them. And Megan said, hey, the coffee's ready, and so Jim went in to pour it, and when he came back out, me and Beaker had written this song. And it's called "Brother's Keeper."

[Brother's Keeper]

Here's another song me and Beaker wrote about the same time. This took a long time to write, because Beaker... his wife Julie found out that they were gonna have a baby, and so he wanted to write a song for the, for their baby who wasn't born yet. And they were one of these odd birds that wouldn't find out what it was with the ultrasound business. So it was really hard to write a song not knowing whether we were writing to a little girl or a little boy. Not that there's a lot of difference in what you would say to them. But, you know, we had to, we had to wait until Aidan was born to really make it a personal song. So one weekend we were out at my teepee, and we were looking at pictures of Aidan, and this is what we came up with.

[Let Mercy Lead]

(applause)

Ok, we'll try a couple of dulcimer songs here. (cheers from audience) We'll start out with an Irish song. ('whoop!' from someone in audience, Rich responds) It's not really Irish, (laughter) but it was written in Ireland. So I consider it Irish. (tuning dulcimer) Heh! Ok, this will be way out of tune so those of you who get bugged by it need to leave now! (still tuning) The only thing about dulcimers, I hit so many wrong notes, it doesn't, I don't need to

worry about how out of tune it is. (laughter) So this is named after the place where we stayed on our first trip to Ireland. And it's called '78 Eatonwood Green.'

[78 Eatonwood Green]

(applause)

[Calling Out Your Name]

(applause)

Was my dulcimer not 'on' the whole time?

(audience) No!

Well, listen. (plays notes) Is it on now? (plays more notes)

(affirmative from audience)

Of course it was so out of tune with the guitar, you're probably lucky. (playing dulcimer) Well, I'll play a little dulcimer song, then. This is when Karl Barth was a really old man, someone asked him a very stupid question. Which... (stops playing) probably all brilliant men are asked stupid questions. You know, there's that thing that you learn in education classes, that there is no such thing as a stupid question, only stupid answers. But I think, given that there probably are really no answers anywhere in the whole wide world, there is probably no such thing as a smart question. That we're probably stupid for asking anything. So... except that curiosity is just a healthy part of being human. And it always cracks me up, people who always say, "Soon as I get to heaven, I'm gonna ask God about this or that." I'm kind of going, wow. If you've still got that on your mind when you get to heaven, then maybe you don't need to bother going. (laughter) You know, Karl Barth - are you guys Barth fans? Is he popular here at Taylor?

(audience) Yeah!

Well, he is blamed for being the father of neo-orthodoxy. Of course a lot of guys get blamed for that, that kind of thing. And it's not always really their fault. (plays a bit on dulcimer) He was world famous. And when he was very old, he was doing a series of lectures, and during a question and

answer period someone asked him, "Could you give us the most profound statement of Christian theology?" And this is Karl Barth's answer to that stupid question.

[Jesus Loves Me] (instrumental)

(applause)

Hey, we've got a new surprise for ya! (pulls out mandolin, laughs) Well, we don't play these no better than we play the rest of that stuff. But at least it's different. This is a... we will now attempt to do a Bach invention. (plucking strings) Or something like that. (to Mitch) Ready?

[Bach duet on mandolins with Mitch]

(applause)

I just wanted to that for you guys, because I think a lot of people think that Christian music was invented by Larry Norman. (audience cheers) I'm a big fan of Larry's and all, but actually, Christian music goes back, you know, all the way to, well, if we count the Old Covenant, then it goes all the way back to, say, even before the Old Covenant, say Jubal, or so. So it ain't no new thing.

And I think one of the things that worries me a little bit about people nowadays, is especially now that everybody's changing hymnals. 'Cause you kind of go, you know, I'm all in favor of inclusive language, when it comes to, you know, when we're trying to talk with one another, I think that's important. But as a writer, I know how much it hacks me off when people change my words. And so I think, you know, it's nice to be inclusive, but write your own daggone hymns if you want to be inclusive. (cheers and applause)

We have a wonderful heritage of music in the Christian church. And as an education major, one of the, just so much that was talked about in education classes, I kind of went, man, growing up in church did so much more for me than education and the schools ever did. (laughter) I mean, you talk about multiculturalism, I got to say "Hello, how are you," in about fifty different languages because every year at VBS - Vacation Bible School - we had a missionary speaker. And we always got to dress up like them, and learn to say "Hi," and that sort of thing. So there was a lot of multiculturalism involved in church and everything. We have a great thing

going. And I just hope that you all don't get all wrapped up in stuff that makes you forget it. How lucky we are, to be Christians and to have churches and all that.

(Rich begins "Boy Like Me, Man Like You" on piano, bungles a line by singing) "me they wrapped in swaddling clothes" (catches himself, stops playing, says) No, **You** they wrapped in swaddling clothes! (aside to the audience) "I get us confused all the time." (audience laughs, Rich continues with the song)

[Boy Like Me/Man Like You]

(applause)

[If I Stand]

(applause)

Calling Mitch McVicker. Mitch McVicker, please report to the Lost Children booth. Your parents are waiting to go home. (laughter) Normally works! (laughter) 'Course, nothing ever works all the time. That's one of the things I love about life, is how it almost makes sense, and then it just stops, just so, so short of making sense. (plays notes on dulcimer) Can you hear that?

(audience affirms)

Oh, good. (yells) Hey, Mitch!

(audience laughs)

(Rich calling to Mitch) Hey, you don't play good enough to show up late!

(sympathetic ah's from audience, Rich calls Mitch by whistle)

(voice from audience) He's taking a dump!

Well, we all have to sometime. (plays some notes on dulcimer) Anyway, let me go get him. I'll be right back. 'Scuse me.

(after a few minutes audience begins chanting) "Mitch! Mitch! Mitch! Mitch!"

(cheers from audience as Rich and Mitch return)

Mitch: Sorry!

(Rich sighs) Yes. To be deducted from next month's pay.

[Creed]

(applause)

[Awesome God] (audience sings along)

(applause)

Whoa! You guys have been a lot of fun to play for. We're both a little bit frazzled, as you might have guessed. And I was gonna say, I start talking about home, because I don't know why, as I get older, I want to spend more time at home. When I get there, I get real uncomfortable, because it doesn't really feel like home, either.

I just wrote a line for Beaker one time. Because, you know how hard it is for guys to tell each other they love each other? We're just, we're so homophobic that we can't even be honest. So I really wanted to tell Beaker I loved him. So I wrote this really stupid song for him that I thought was kind of funny. And I included a woman's name, because my audience is so homophobic, that if I wrote a song for a guy they would stop buying my records, and let's face it, I gotta make a living.

The line that I especially liked was "if your home is just another place where you're a stranger." Because I think, I think so many of us are looking for that place where we really fit. Where we really belong. And the bad news is that I don't think that there is such a place. I think that part of being human is being alone. And being lonely. I think one of the stresses on a lot of our friendships is that we require that the people we love take away that loneliness. And they really can't. And so, when we still feel lonely, even in the company of people we love, we become angry with them because they don't do what we think they're supposed to. Which is really something that they can't do for ya. So don't be mad at each other over this. Don't be disillusioned with each other just because you feel lonely around each other.

Remember, we are a fallen people. And we thought, our ancestors thought, so many stupid things. Course what thoughts aren't really stupid, when you get down to the bottom of it all. Sooner or later, we all die. And when you're

dead, your brain is just gonna rot away, so all those thoughts you're keeping up there ain't gonna do nobody no good. (laughter) Worms will like it one way just as well as the other.

And never forget that someday you will be dead. Because that's, that's just as sure as anything I can think of. So love each other as much as you can right now. Because this may be the last day you've got to love each other. Don't love each other because you think you'll be less lonely if you do. There's no point in that.

And don't try to get even, don't waste a lot of time trying to get even with each other. Because you never really do. Our ancestors thought if they ate of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, that they would be like God. The truth was, not only did they not find out good from evil, but they also were unable to know God after that. Not only were they unable to know God, they were unable to know each other. Not only were they unable to know each other, they were unable to know themselves. And that is our, that is our heritage, folks.

You will be lonely for a good part of your life, so just get used to it. Remember, someday you'll be dead. It won't last forever. So while you still have life, love everybody you can love. Love them as much as you can love them. Don't try to keep them for yourself. Because when you're gone, they'll just resent you for having left. Love freely. Remember that, after we die - and I don't know how it all goes together - in fact, I know so little any more that I'm not really sure why I try and say anything to anybody. But I get the strong feeling from reading the Bible that after we die, that somehow, Christ is going to raise us up again.

And somehow we'll be a body, still. But we'll be different than we are now. A new body's what we get, I've got a great one on order. (laughter) If Playgirl saw what I had in my mind for my next body, they would hire me now for pictures in the next life. (laughter) You laugh, but someday you'll be astonished. (more laughter) I'll have no bags under my eyes, I'll have a jaw line, biceps - the whole works. I'll be a 'jock.' Either a jock or a fife player, I haven't decided which.

And I kept thinking, maybe somehow, if I really read the Bible, if I really studied, my faith, that that would give me a sense of belonging, that I would find some kind of home there. And the funny thing is that I haven't, yet.

People often ask me what I believe. Which always cracks me up, because you always think, well, why would I write that song, 'Creed,' if I didn't believe it? That should pretty much outline it for ya. They want to know what my millennial view is. I don't even have a millennial view. I can't see it. They want to know what I think about baptism. Well, I think a lot of things about baptism, but I don't really know what I **believe** about it. My faith isn't in that. My faith isn't in Creationism. Certainly isn't in the Religious Right kind of reasoning. Everything that has ever happened has failed, and it will continue to fail. But I think that's because God is a jealous God. And He will not share us even with our **best** ideas about Him.

And when Christ has stripped away all of your 'phony-baloney' kind of systematic theology, all of your lame, Protestant kind of stupidity, all of your Catholic hang-ups, when Christ has stripped away everything that we have invented about Him, then maybe we will encounter Him as He really is. And we will know ourselves as we really are. So don't be afraid that your faith gets shaken. Could be that God is shaking you forward, and shaking you free.

And the issue is not which side of which fence you end up on. The issue is really, has to do with, what does it mean to love Christ? What does it mean to obey Him? And I'm not really even sure what that is. But if there is any meaning in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, it is this: that there is a God who created us, and who loves us so much that He would stop at nothing to bring us to Him.

And I really suspect that of all the things we think we want to know, the only thing we really want to know, is that we are loved. And if Jesus means anything, He means that you are loved. I hope you know that.

And I hope you stop worrying about all the stuff you don't know, because I don't think it amounts to a hill of beans. This is a song that Beaker wrote the chorus to. I wish I would have written this chorus, because it's one of my favorite things that I never wrote. (laughter) And it sounds so good if you all sing it. So (begins intro to "Sometimes By Step") I wrote these verses, but mostly because I wanted to get writing credit. I'm not sure they really fit in this song, though. I don't know what else to sing in the meantime. So...

[Sometimes By Step] (audience finishes acappella)

(applause)

Transcribed by Sandy McMullen

[Return to Calling Out Your Name](#)

Toledo, Ohio Concert Transcript

↑ kidbrothers.net/transcripts/toledo.html

I need you all to get your car keys out, and then you hold them up in front of you, and you just shake 'em to the beat. And if y'all do that, together we'll make this whole place sound like a jingle dress at a really cool pow-wow.

[Save Me]

[The Howling]

[Calling Out Your Name]

Thank you. This is a song off the new album, it's called, "Cry The Name."

[Cry The Name]

(drum intro to "I See You")

All right, now this is a song you have to sing on. So the way we do it is, I sing a line of this song, and then you sing it back. Or you can think of it as, I'll pray a line of this song, and then you pray it up.

[I See You]

Thank you! I don't know if any of you have ever had the chance to meet Beaker or not, but this is Beaker over here. And, singing with the background vocalists is his wife, Julie. They now have a sixteen-month little boy named Aidan, and Beaker wanted to write a song for him, and we wrote about 500 and none of 'em were good enough, so I was very relieved when we finally wrote this. This is called, "Let Mercy Lead."

[Let Mercy Lead]

Ok, now this song you guys have to sing on because it's got notes I can't hit - so I'm trusting you can hit 'em for me. Every now and again you gotta go, "One thing!" only hopefully better than that. Let me hear you do it.

Crowd: "One thing!"

Yes, you do do it better than that - so, if you'll just do that at the appropriate moments, this will go great! And if you know the part about the 'pure in heart', sing that too.

[My One Thing]

That's where you do it, right there...

[rest of song]

This song is called, "Brother's Keeper."

[Brother's Keeper]

Thank you... and here's another sing-along song.

[Hold Me, Jesus]

This is the first song Beaker and I ever wrote together, and it's called, "Boy Like Me, Man Like You."

[Boy Like Me, Man Like You]

Mark Robertson on bass, Aaron Smith on drums. And, I don't know if you've had the opportunity, if we've ever been here before, I'm sure they've been with me, because we've been traveling together for about six years, and they're a big part of everything I've got to do, this is, over here is Lee Lundgren. And on my left is Nikki Lundgren. And so I think just about everybody in the band that's married had kids this year, including them, and they had a little girl that I think is about 15 months old - her name is Eliza. So, since I'm not married, I don't have kids of my own, I horn in on other people's business - talked them into letting me write a song with them about her. So we took some of their ideas and some of my ideas, and a lot of inspiration from their little girl, and wrote this song.

[Eli]

Thank you. This is a song that I wrote for the album, but we forgot to record it. And, it's probably better that way becuz, on this last album, it was like, family time in the studio, or something, because we had three nursing mothers, all at once. So it became really weird, because you never knew where to look. And...

Other voice: True! (laughter)

...just the way it goes sometimes! Very wholesome atmosphere, you know. And it was so weird, because normally, we don't have women around, all the time, in the studio. And so the conversation was so, so weird when women are in the room. You know, so sedate. It's normally quite something. And this time we, people were talking about Congoleum and stuff. So it was a new and interesting experience. You know, like I said, I don't have kids, I

don't have a wife, I don't even date, I don't do none of that stuff. But, I... it's because all these, so many songs on the album have to do with these families, things, this probably wouldn't have fit on the album even if we had remembered to have done it. You know, I was just concerned one time because I noticed, and I don't listen to a lot of music, but one time I listened to a whole afternoon's worth of Christian music, and it struck me as odd that there are no good Christian break-up songs. (laughter) And I thought, you know, I know a lot of people who are Christian and who have broken up, so I took it upon myself to write a song that I might know something about. So, that's this song. It goes something like... don't you hate it when you go to a concert and someone goes, "I'm gonna do a song and it goes something like this"? And you always wanna go, "Look buddy, I paid exactly fifteen bucks to hear you. I wanna hear exactly what that song sounds like!" So, I'm not sure exactly how I wrote it, but tonight it goes exactly like this:

[We Are Not As Strong]

Thank you. Thank you very much. Someone requested this song, it's one of my favorites, which is why I don't do it very often, because, if you like a song, the best way to end up not liking it is to do it night after night. So I only do it occasionally, but I'll do it tonight. It's a song I wrote when my great-grandma died, but it's not really about my great-grandma. Just, it's... when you're young, you think that your grandparents are gonna live forever. And when they die, it kind of strikes you as weird. Then all of a sudden you realize that you're gonna die too, and none of us really want to do that soon so... I just started thinking about how mortal we are. Which is kind of a relief, because on the other hand, whereas none of us are anxious to die or anything, the idea of not being able to is not particularly appealing, either. In that way life is a lot like comedy - timing is everything.

So, this is... (coughs) One of the songs, and I think the thing I like about, and you know, I like most of my songs. I don't see any point in writing songs you don't like. 'Cause there's always some of you in the audience that's gonna want to hear it, so you're gonna have to play it. So you better write stuff that you enjoy.

And writing is such a peculiar thing, because if you write, then people think that you're naturally smart. And the truth is, that's just not so. And people think you sit around in this, you know, like, real, kind of, spiritual fog, and have these great revelations. Well, if I was getting revelations, I wouldn't submit them to my publisher, I'd give them to the American Bible Society and have them canonized. Just because you can make things rhyme, and you know, put certain meters in things, doesn't mean you know anything. And that's the scary thing about Twentieth-century Christianity, is, we no longer have, in America, anyway, it's, we have this celebrity-based kind of spiritual aspiration thing. It doesn't make sense. And we all want to grow up and be like someone we've never met. And the problem is, if we ever met them, we wouldn't want to be like them anymore, we'd want to

be like the people we know, that are older than us, that we ought to be looking up to.

So it's always a weird thing - people want me to pray for them and stuff after concerts, and I go, wow. If you knew how bad a 'pray-er' I was, you would never ask that. Why don't you go to your elders? Because they're gonna be able to pray more effectively for you. They're gonna know better how to pray, and then, when God answers it, they'll be there to help you to see it. 'Cause a lot of times He answers, and we don't recognize it. And I ain't gonna be around to help you see it. So, I think I just believe in Church more than I believe in Christian music. Although I like Christian music, because if it wasn't for this, I would have to get a job. (laughter) But anyway, this is a song that, I guess, it doesn't attempt to so much make sense out of death as it just attempts to say, ok, it's gonna happen. So, if I have my 'rathers,' this is how I wanna die--so that's what this song's about.

[Elijah]

(IBS appeal)

[(mighty things are comin' they're comin' to pass...)]

[The Color Green]

This next song is a dance song, and if you don't dance, we'll be wasting our time and yours...it's called "Damascus Road."

[Damascus Road]

While you're up, why don't you sing now? 'Cause some of you don't dance too good, I can see that! (laughter) Which is ok, I don't dance neither. I would always go to them dances, you know, as a kid, 'cause, you don't meet a lot of girls hanging out at home. Not the datable type, anyway - unless you're from Arkansas. (laughter) So, I would always go and hang out by the punch bowl, because I'm, you know, kind of shy and wishing I was a Nazarene, or something. You know, people would come up and say, why don't you dance with us? I always thought it would be so cool to be able to go, "It's against my religion." (laughter) But I just always had to say, "No, man, I'm too hung up." (laughter)

But I could hang out. I was a very hanger-outer. After the dances, that's what I always liked. After the dances and the ball games, and stuff. Because, I don't know if you remember this, but they used to build trucks out of steel, and you could run over anything in them. We'd all go up on North Cart Road, because there weren't any houses around up there. We would all go up there and park our dads' trucks next to each other, and everyone would tune their dad's AM hi-fi radio to the same station, and we'd have terrible sound coming out of several trucks in a row.

Then we'd take walks, and lay out in the backs of those trucks and look up at the stars, and we had everything figured out. We knew how to impeach Nixon... wish I could remember that now. We knew how to end the war in Viet Nam, we knew how to end poverty and stay rich, we could do anything. And then, you know, we graduated, and we forgot. And we've been getting stupider every day of our lives. So if you're young, enjoy it, 'cause you won't know everything when you're older. (laughter) And you won't like that, either, because you'll find out that information ain't all it's cracked up to be. And some things are more important than information.

I think the most important thing in the world is to know that you're loved. I think that's the reason that I'm most thankful to my parents, having me read the Bible and go to church and stuff, because if the Scriptures communicate anything to us, it is this, that we really are loved. And there are people who are all fired up about current stuff, and there's people who are all excited about the antiquities. And I think everything comes and goes. And you know, up there on North Cart Road now they've built all these houses, and stuff. They've ruined it. (laughter)

But the nice thing is, if you go a little bit farther north you can get away from people, and the stars are still up there. And the stuff that really matters, it stays forever. And that's kind of what this song's about.

[begins piano intro]

You know, it'll sound really good if you sing...

[Sometimes By Step]

You're singing. That's good!

[end of tape]

Transcribed by Sandy McMullen

[Return to Calling Out Your Name](#)

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Anderson, Indiana Concert Review

 kidbrothers.net/transcripts/anderson.html

Anderson University

November 16, 1995

Brian Rhinehart

[Intro to Save Me]

Good evening. You guys want to be in the band tonight? Here's what you do - you get your car keys out. Get them out of your pocket and hold them up in front of you and then you shake them and just try to keep a beat with them. That's all you gotta do.

[Save Me]

[The Howling] Thank you!

[Calling Out Your Name]

This is a song off the new album. It's called Cry the Name.

[Cry the Name]

[Intro to I See You]

All right, this is a sing along song, so, what we'll do is I'll sing a line to the song and then you sing it back. OK? Ready?

[I See You]

Thank you, you're singing very good! I'm going to introduce a guy that I've been co-writing with now for eight years, and we've, uh, done a lot of stuff together. This is Beaker. (Applause) Back there with the singers is his wife Julie. (Applause) They now have a 16 month old boy named Aiden, and Beaker wanted to write him a song, and we wrote about 500. None of them were good enough (audience laughter). So I was definitely relieved when

we finally wrote this. This is called Let Mercy Lead.

[Let Mercy Lead]

That's Rick Elias on guitar over there (applause). This is a song that you guys have to sing because it's too high for me to hit. Your part goes "one thing" (Rich strains to hit these notes since they are so high, and as a result, he sings off key). See what I mean? (audience laughter) Can you do that?

Audience: "One thing"

RM: You can do it! You do it great! So, please do it every time, and if you know the part about "the pure in heart" you can sing that too.

[My One Thing]

This song is called Brother's Keeper.

[Brother's Keeper]

Thank you.

[Hold Me Jesus]

This here's the first song me and Beaker ever wrote together, and we started in Lincoln, Illinois, and we finished in St. Louis, and it's called Boy Like Me/Man Like You.

[Boy Like Me/Man Like You] (audience cheers at the mention of Indiana in the song)

Thank you. I've always wished I'd grown up in a state that had fewer syllables so that I could cheat and when I was in Ohio I could, you know, sing "Ohio," and when I was in Kentucky, "Kentucky," but Indiana has more syllables than you can cheat on very easily so it keeps me honest. I'm not above doing things just for the sake of applause (audience laughter). In fact, of all my 63 top addictions (audience laughter) applause is pretty high on the list (applause). It's very dangerous, and, uh, thank you for clapping, and please remember that you did that when I turn into a brat.

This is a song I wrote, probably, you know, I had a kind of privileged childhood. I grew up sort of in a Norman Rockwell painting. The only thing

that was weird in my raising was the Communist headquarters - you may not know about this (audience laughter). But the Communist Headquarters was in our barn (audience laughter). I don't know if you know how they populated when I was a little kid - I understood this perfectly well that the Communist populated their countries by hiding out in barns in Indiana and if you were late going out to do your chores, and you had to go out after dark they would snatch you (audience laughter), and take you over to Russia and turn you into a Communist, and I wasn't ever sure at the time what a Communist was but I knew they were bad (audience laughter). I knew they were scary, so I always tried to avoid going out to the barn for any reason, at all, because it generally, there was work to be done once you got out there (audience laughter). Which work has never been a big addiction of mine (audience laughter).

That's I think how I became so religious (audience laughter). No, not the avoiding work part! Religion is in all in favor of work and stuff. But, the being scared of going out to the barn because I always was, because of the Commies, you know (audience laughter). So I would quote the 23rd Psalm all the way out to the barn several times. I could get it in about five times before I got to the barn and I felt fairly covered. Then on the way back from the barn I normally could get all the way to "I shall not want. He maketh..." and then I'd be at the door and out of breath.

So I think if you want to be religious, the key is to march straight ahead in to whatever scares you the most, and that will make you learn more of the Bible (audience laughter). You don't memorize as much when you're running as when you're walking fearfully toward the headquarters of the enemy.

I had a great-grandmother that lived right next door to us. She was a great woman. She probably, if I think about who the person, you know, whatever spiritual director that might have had the most impact on my life it would probably be my great-grandmother, because she was really a wonderful woman and had a very down to earth approach to religion. She said bad words sometimes, and I loved that (audience laughter). That's why I always liked Christmas - because it was the only time you could say 'ass' in church (audience laughter). I used to sing that line out of that carol over and over again (audience laughter).

But anyway, when she finally died, I realized how mortal we all were because everyone who knew my great-grandmother just assumed that she

wouldn't die and when she finally did, it was kind of sobering. So I wrote this song not because of her death, but because I'm so selfish that when anyone else dies, I think about how I'm going to do that too someday. Unless I stay really lucky. But I doubt that that will happen, so that's how this song came about.

[Elijah]

Thank you. Now we'll do a song that I forgot to put on the last album. We wrote it for the last album but then we forgot to record it (audience laughter). So we ended up with only nine songs, we had to write a real bad one quick (audience laughter). I won't tell you which one that was (audience laughter).

This is, you know, I often take the part of the underdog. I think I'm a natural born bleeding heart. I noticed there were no good Christian break up songs (audience laughter and applause). So I decided to write one (audience laughter). Because I know more about that. Everyone else was having babies, you know, and so, I helped co-write songs for people who had kids. They had to fill in most of the information and I just used my imagination (audience laughter). I got tired of that, so I decided to write something I knew something about (audience laughter). I'm always worried though about doing it in front of people because of all the Focus on the Family stuff (audience laughter). But even in good families you break up sometimes, and I don't think it has to be looked at as a happy thing - that's why we try to avoid it as much as possible because it is an unhappy occurrence.

Do you ever just wanna, do you ever find yourself sitting in church on Sunday morning and you just get this urge to stand up and say "OK, cut the bull...!" (audience laughter and applause). Well, that's what this song is about. It goes...

[We Are Not as Strong as We Think We Are]

Thank you. Well, that's kind of a downer song - I'll try not to do it again (audience laughter).

This is a song I wrote a long time ago, just because everything was going great. I think - have you ever seen the movie *The Trip to Bountiful*? You should get that if you haven't seen it because it's a really wonderful movie. Geraldine Page is in it. She's talking, her character is talking about how

some days everything goes great, some days everything goes rotten, which I agree with most of. Except most of the time for me it's been decades (audience laughter). She says "I guess some days the Lord's just with you," and she says, "Maybe the Lord's with us all the time we just don't know it." I tend to think that that must be the way it is because I think if you're a Christian then you just have to assume that God is good, right? And if God is good, then I think we also pretty much assume that life is a gift from God and if God is good and he gives us life, then life must be good even if we don't particularly like it. It's not important to like it, it's just important to not die (audience laughter).

As long as you can, don't die (audience laughter). So this is, I wrote this because things were going good but I realized that things don't always - things always go good, I guess, but things aren't always pleasant. Then I was thinking about the whole thing of going out to the barn when I was a kid and how scared I was and how scared of the dark I was until I became a teenager (audience laughter). That fixes that! Once you become a teenager, the scariest thing in life, in all of life, is the whole thing of being in love. I think it's a very - you put yourself in a very precarious place when you decide to do that. I have this theory about marriage and singleness. My theory is that - well, my dad gave me this really great advice one time. He said "if you can live without her, do." (audience laughter)

Audience member: Preach it man, preach it!

RM: Well, I did, and that's why I write break up songs - and other people write dating songs (audience laughter and applause).

But my theory is that for those of us who are too weak to remain single, God gives us a spouse. For those of us who are too hung up to handle marriage, God gives us celibacy. So, pick your weakness. Pick your poison, I guess. But anyway, for those of you who do choose to be in love and stuff, go for it (audience laughter). And I think it's a good thing - I've heard a lot about it (audience laughter). Anyway, Kelly and Bill are going to get married I think in July or something really soon. So, good luck, and I think this song may be applicable.

[If I Stand]

Thank you. That's why I always tell these really sad stories (audience laughter). It works! (audience laughter)

We're doing (coughing)... excuse me... so sorry. I didn't mean to get this cold. We're doing this tour with International Bible Society and you know I've worked for years with Compassion. I'm still a Compassion Rep., and I still love the work with Compassion International. Are any of you Compassion Sponsors? (applause). It's a great organization, but because I moved to the reservation last fall, and I'm beginning to get somewhat acquainted with some of what we're up against in terms of, or what the church is up against in terms of working with Native Americans, I decided to do this tour with International Bible Society because they have an edition of Scriptures that I'm very excited about. It's called The Jesus Way. What The Jesus Way is, is an edition that's easy to read English partly because for many Native American people, English is a second language.

---Recording cuts to---

[Quoting Deuteronomy to the Devil]

[The Color Green]

OK, this next song is a dance song, so if you don't dance, we'll be wasting our time.

[Damascus Road]

Thank you. Wow, you guys are the best dancing we've had so far (applause), which is a such a shock because I'm from Indiana, and I don't dance! You know, I always went to dances, because you don't meet a lot of girls hanging out at home. Not the datable kind - unless you live in Arkansas (audience laughter).

So I'd always go to dances, and not dance. I was always the guy hanging out by the punch bowl, wishing I was a Nazarene, because that way if someone asked "you want to dance?" I could say, "No, it's against my religion." (audience laughter) I always had to go "No, I'm too hung up." (audience laughter) But I could hang out great. I could hang out with the best of them.

Where I live, there's this road, and you can go... the thing about roads up here is you know how straight they are? I always liked that. So after the dances or ball games or whatever, we'd all go up... I don't know if you remember this, but they used to build trucks out of steel and stuff

(audience laughter). So these things were indestructible, and we'd all take our dad's trucks up on North Cart Road and we'd park side by side and we'd tune that AM station, you know, on that high fidelity radio and we'd have tons really bad sounds coming out of our trucks.

And you'd take walks and you'd put the tailgate down and lay out in the backs of those trucks and you'd look up at the stars. It looked so beautiful and we had everything figured out. We were so smart. We got dumber (audience laughter). As time went on, I can't remember anything. We knew how to impeach Nixon - which I wish I could remember what that was now (audience laughter). We knew how to end the war, end poverty and get rich all at the same time. Then, you know, like I said, now we can't remember. But the nice thing about getting older is that it bothers you less and less how stupid you are (audience laughter). Because you hang out with smart people long enough and you see that they have nothing that you want. It's more important to be alive than it is to be smart. Better a living dog than a dead lion, I guess.

And so, there were times though, I was always the last one to leave - because I never wanted to miss anything. Nothing ever went on, so I don't know what I was worried about, but the cool thing would be, because of how straight the roads were, what you could do was if it was a full moon, you could drive just a little bit faster than you knew you should and when you got your speed up really good, then you turn your lights out, and you drive by moonlight... until you took out a row of fences or something (audience laughter).

Well, I went back there - they've ruined it. They built houses all over the place. It's not a whole lot of fun anymore. But I did notice one amazing thing last time I went up there - that is that the stars are still up there. There are things that don't change. There are people who become obsessive with antiquities. There are people who become obsessive with what's current. I don't think either one amounts to a hill of beans. I think what is eternal is what really matters. So, that's that.

I went to this church one time where they wanted me to dance. Those churches always scare me (audience laughter). That's why I so glad there are denominations. I think it's wonderful, if you want to dance that you can go to a church that does that, I just don't want you to do it at my church. We just like to sit still. Anyway, I went with a friend of mine. We got there, and everyone's dancing around, and I was doing my Hoosier thing

(audience laughter). This lady came up and said "Dance brother, don't you have the Spirit?" And I went, "Wow, you know, I didn't realize that dancing was one of the fruits of the Spirit... or any of the gifts either. I didn't know that was the equivalent of being spiritually vital."

And she went, "Well, David danced."

And I said, "Well, right lady, in his underwear! How far do you want to take this?" (audience laughter) So I think dancing is fine for those of you who like to do it. The most reiterated command in the whole Bible- you might not know this, but the most reiterated command in the whole Bible is the command to sing.

So, I figure when you find a command that is easy to follow and fun to follow you should follow it a lot, because not all of them are that easy. And certainly some of them are less fun than that. So, in the effort to up your chances here tonight, we're going to ask you to sing. This is kind of a song about growing up in Indiana, but it's also kind of a song about living in the presence of the God who is eternal, and who doesn't change. If you want to sing this, please do.

[Sometimes By Step]

Wow! You guys sound great!

[Awesome God]

[Creed]

Thank you. Thank you very much. We've already done all the songs we know...

Audience members: We love you Rich!

RM: Thank you so much! ... so we thought you guys could do the encore. That's why we had the discount ticket rate for this particular audience. So Ashley's going to lead you, and you sing with her.

[It is Well with My Soul]

And I think that is what Christian music is really about. And you do it really good. So I hope you go to church frequently, and sing. I get so nostalgic

when I come back here. I remember when I was a kid everyone else played basketball really good. I never could play basketball. I think that's why I always liked church (audience laughter). Because men don't sing in Indiana very much . And you go to church and they would sing and they sang so badly (audience laughter), and so loud (audience laughter). It was always wonderful to hear. Because it was kind of reassuring, in some sick sort of way (audience laughter).

I remember, you know, you go to these parties on Saturday night and people would say, about 8:00 on Sunday morning "Whoa, I have to go - I gotta get to church!" People would say, "Why do you want to go to church, all those hypocrites." And I say, "Look, why do I want to stay here with all you hypocrites?" (audience laughter) I never knew why going to church made you a hypocrite. They'd say because you go to church and you're all "Holy, Holy, Holy" for two or three hours, and then you go home and sin. I'd say "exactly!" (audience laughter) For two or three hours you're doing pretty good! (audience laughter) Maybe the problem isn't that you go to church, maybe the problem is that you go home!

I never understood why going to church made you a hypocrite either, because nobody goes to church because they're perfect. If you've got it all together, you don't need to go. You can go jogging with all the other perfect people on Sunday morning (audience laughter). Every time you go to church, you're confessing again to yourself, to your family, to the people you pass on the way there, to the people who will greet you there, that you don't have it all together. And that you need their support. You need their direction. You need some accountability, you need some help.

Saying someone is a hypocrite is such a sore thing to say. It's kind of like saying they're human. We know there are people who think better of us than we know they have reason to. Funny thing about the whole thing. I love the story about Jesus calling Nathaniel. I think it's so funny. That he calls him and he says, "O behold an Israelite in whom there is nothing false." And Nathaniel, I love this, because he's like "Oh, how did you know me?" And Jesus said "Look, before you ever saw me, while you were still sitting under a fig tree, I saw you." And Nathaniel, who had so casually met the Lord, suddenly was crushed by the knowledge that God has of him.

I think it's funny that when Adam and Eve sinned, they covered themselves with a couple fig leaves. Then Nathaniel, who I think the Lord said sarcastically "O behold an Israelite in whom there is nothing false," he was

sitting under a whole tree of those leaves. I think we all do that too. And we have reason to. If you knew what I was really like, you wouldn't pay to be here. I'd have to go out and get a real job (audience laughter).

The thing that's so funny about all that though, is that God does see us as we are. And you can't fool Him. And what's even funnier - you know the story about Jesus and the rich young ruler? I love that story. And you know what I think is really funny is that in all three of the synoptic Gospels, that story immediately follow the story of Jesus blessing the children, which I think is a hysterical story, because you think about the apostles and how they're good Hebrews and they're good monotheists and they're probably really struggling with the idea that God can become flesh. Lucky for Jesus they weren't Greeks - they never would have bought that.

They finally begin to get a hold of, they get a grasp that maybe God can become flesh and dwell among us, maybe God can be a man, and then they come back and not only is God a man, but He's acting like an idiot! He's hanging out with a bunch of kids. He's blessing them, you know, and you think "How do you bless children?" Well, the best way I know is that you pick them up and you just throw them as high as you can, and you catch them right before they splatter (audience laughter). You get down on all fours and you run around the room and you let them ride you and you buck them off. You beard them. You put your mouth against their bellies and you make funny noises. Here's Jesus probably doing all this business.

His disciples were humiliated! And they said "You should not be making such a fool of yourself!" And I love this, Jesus says, "Here, look, look fellas. I'll call the shots here. I may be dumb, but I am God. And I'll tell you what else, if you wanna come into my kingdom, you'll come in like one of these or you won't come in at all." What is remarkable is that in all three synoptic Gospels, the rich young ruler comes up immediately afterwards and asks the stupidest question in the Bible, which American Christians in the twentieth century perpetually ask, and it's such a hack off. "Good Master, what must I do that I might have eternal life?" And the reason this is such a ridiculous question is because while this young ruler is coming up with this brilliant question for his big photo-op with the Master, the Master had already answered the question.

Jesus had just got done saying he must be like a child, or he cannot come into My kingdom. And this guy comes up and asks "what must I do?" It's

not what you do. It's what you allow Christ to do. This young man was so arrogant that when God Himself spoke, he didn't bother to listen.

And here's the amazing thing in the Gospel of Mark, which you know is the briefest of the Gospels. And anytime you come across a detail in the book of Mark, take note of it, because he didn't waste time. He gives us three details that the other two synoptics leave out. He says this amazing thing - that Jesus looked at the man. Jesus, who was God, is so humble, that when this man, who was a mere mortal, who would like you and me someday be dead and no more, and would just stink up the ground for a while and then that's it. This man would not listen to God, but God is so humble that He took note of this man. He looked at him. And when God saw him, He loved him. And it was because God loved Him, I think, that He spoke.

Some of us are so afraid that God's not going to look at us. So we're out there doing all sorts of things to get God to take notice, but folks, God notices you. The fact is, He can't take His eyes off of you. However badly you think of yourself, God is crazy about you. God is in love with you. Some of us even fear that someday we'll do something so bad that He won't notice you anymore. Well let me tell you, God loves us completely. And He knew us at our worst before He ever began to love us at all. And in the love of God, there are no degrees, there is only love.

So tonight I'm going to say to you what the angels said to every character in the Bible that they encountered, except for Mary, the mother of Jesus. They said "Don't be afraid." We've got a little while to go yet in this life, and it's a scary thing, but don't be afraid. Be of good cheer. He has overcome the world. And He has chosen to dwell within us. And we ain't all that big a deal, but our Savior is. He will walk with us through this life, and when it's over, He will raise us up again, and take us to be where He is. Not because of what we've done, but because of who He is. Because of the love He has for us.

So go, and live in that awareness... love one another... read your Bible... wash your dishes... make your bed... and don't be afraid. Here's one more song for us.

[Doxology]

[Return to Calling Out Your Name](#)

Joy Jam '94 Concert Transcript

↑ kidbrothers.net/transcripts/joyjam.html

Transcribed by Lee McConnell

Rich Mullins performed at an all day Saturday Christian music festival in Louisville, Kentucky along with CCM artists Al Denson, Strait Company, White Heart, Michael Sweet, 4 Him, Carman, Michael W. Smith, and comedian Mark Lowry. (Susan Ashton was scheduled to perform but became hospitalized at the last minute.)

This transcript records Rich's approximately 40 minute appearance on stage and audience reaction to his songs and words. He was joined by Jimmy Abegg, known simply as Jimmy A., who accompanied Rich on guitar and background vocals. All songs performed are [bracketed] and followed by the instrument Rich played for that song. Audience reactions and visual details are explained in (parenthesis). Rich's words between songs are written just as he spoke, including pauses, mistakes, and the occasional "uh", which he uttered when thinking of what next he was going to say. The use of ellipses...represent brief pauses, sudden changes in thought, and/or other speech patterns that do not translate well into written form. (For this reason it may help either to slow down as you read or to reread Rich's words to obtain the feel and rhythm of his speech.) Each song receives recognition in the form of applause or cheers from the audience, but sometimes the applause is greater than normal. Thus, (Applause) is used to signify strong audience reaction to Rich's songs and words.

The concert begins as Rich is introduced while he and Jimmy A take the stage. Rich is carrying his hammered dulcimer, has his guitar slung over his shoulder onto his back, is wearing jean shorts, an oversized t-shirt, and is ...barefoot. Rich stands at center stage to begin and then seats himself after the first song. Jimmy A sits in a folding chair next to him and plays guitar on every song but the first.

[I Will Sing] Rich sings acappella by himself

[Hope to Carry On] guitar

(In a typical "Rich moment", confusion ensues as Rich looks around stage perplexingly and states...)

OK, I plugged the wrong thing in, so we've got to do a bit of adjusting on the hammered dulcimer, but we'll try to get it up and playing for you.

(Rich briefly tunes dulcimer)

This is a song that Beaker and I...(Rich interrupts himself)...Beaker isn't with us today; his wife is about an hour and a half away from having a baby, so he's obviously been busy doing other things...(pause), which I can only envy him for...(audience replies with laughter, and Rich gets back to his original thought)...This is a song that we wrote on an airplane because his wife wasn't there, and uh, it's called Creed.

[Creed] dulcimer

Here is another song Beaker and I wrote and I don't know how to play it so uh...(he looks over at Jimmy) ...do you know Jimmy A?...he's uh, "a lot of fun to play with him" and he's kind of a hero of mine and uh, he's going to do the guitar on this because I can't. (Rich was probably trying to say the phrase "a lot of fun to play with" as well as "play with him", but it came out all jumbled together as he spoke.)

[Boy Like Me/Man Like You] no instrument

(Two things happen during this song that illustrate Rich's down-to-earth "ragamuffin-like" qualities and humorous nature. Rich stands to sing this song with his arms folded across his chest, but then bends down and grabs a Diet Pepsi after the first verse. As he sings he opens it and takes a few sips between verses. Then, he nonchalantly wipes his mouth on the sleeve of his shirt after completing a chorus and before beginning the next verse. Also, he tries to whistle the interlude just as it sounds on the WABAIRI V.2 recording, but his whistling quickly turns into laughter as he recognizes his failed attempt to duplicate the sound on stage. He tries a second time near the end of the song but ends in laughter once again while Jimmy A. finishes the whistling for him, hitting the notes that Rich was unable to whistle.)

Ok, this is a song I wrote...I always say that I wrote it about moving to Kansas but the truth is there is so little to be said about Kansas that if I had

only written about that it would have been a very short song. (laughter from the audience) So I enlarged it to include all the prairie states and uh, that just made it a whole lot more of the same. And then I put a long introduction in the beginning of it and I...(clear throat)...you know I went to bible college and I thought about being a preacher, but...(pause) but, I find out at bible college that mostly what preachers do is they take a true point and then they tell a lot of lies about it. (audience groans with a collective "Whoa! I can't believe he said that." reaction) So I decided to be a musician instead. So this is a lot of exaggerating about what it's like to be on the plains.

[Calling Out Your Name] dulcimer

(Applause)

(Rich moves to the electric keyboard, thanks audience, and introduces next song by saying...)

Thank you.

This is a song I wrote in Amsterdam.

[Hold Me Jesus] keyboard

(Applause, brief pause, and then directly into...)

[Screen Door] keyboard

(Audience clapping throughout song)

(Applause)

[If I Stand] keyboard

(Audience immediately recognizes introduction to next song)

[Awesome God] keyboard

(Audience emphatically joins in singing chorus and refrains with upraised arms toward heaven)

(near end of song, Rich instructs audience with...)

Alright, you sing it!

(Audience sings out strong)

(Clapping/applause)

(Short bow by Rich to acknowledge appreciative audience)

Thank you very much (Rich sipping soda again) and uh, I appreciate so much your being here to listen. I don't have a big band and all that with me...(laughter from audience)...And you've been very patient...(cheers from the crowd)...But uh, we're going up to Illinois and going to be practicing with Jimmy, and uh Rick Elias, and uh , Oh! I can't even remember who all...there's a bunch of guys, we're all getting together and we're going to be touring this summer, and maybe you can come hear us with the band and we'll be as loud as we can be. Some people like it quiet I guess. I don't really have a preference.

A lot of people ask me if I like Christian music and I say, "Yeah, I,...I,...(lost in thought but recovers with...) 'When Peace Like a River', one of my favorite pieces,... 'The Old Rugged Cross', there's a lot of pieces like that I really love." Then they say, "Well do you like secular music?" And I say, "Well, I've got to admit that I'm awfully found of 'Oh Susanna' ...(laughter from audience)...and 'Oh Shenandoah' ...(more laughter from audience)...most secular songs that start with the word 'O' I really like....and 'Moon River', by Andy Williams. His recording is, I think, the definitive one."

When I was a kid, you know occasionally my parents would argue and uh, when things got really heated up....we lived on a farm so us kids would go for a walk. And when we got back from that walk, if...when we were coming up to the house, if we heard 'Moon River' coming out of the window we knew that we should just turn around and spend another hour or so, uh... (audience laughs enough so that Rich doesn't feel the need to finish his sentence)...so anyways, I always feel good about that song. 'Cause my... (Rich, thinking about his parents, begins again)...I'm so fortunate that my parents loved each other, and I thank God that they were uh, healthy, vital people...(audience laughs)...otherwise I wouldn't have gotten here.

There are a million preferences we can all have but uh, there's only one savior!...(audience approvingly agrees with clapping and cheers)

Sometimes I am tempted to believe that I am better than anybody because I know Him. And then I remember that uh, I don't know him because I was smart enough to figure out some riddle. And I don't know him because I was good enough to ascend into heaven on my own and shake hands with him and meet him. Of all the things that make God awesome, the most awesome thing in the world that I can imagine from a god is that one who would be holy, and one that would be just, ...and one that would be innocent and beautiful, and would have no need of me...that someone like that could love me is amazing. And uh, that does not make me a good person; but it makes Him a great God!...(audience applauds wildly)

(after applause dies down Rich pauses slightly and then reminisces about...)

I remember one time, Beaker and I were hiking in the Appalachian trail and he met some friends of his and they all went in...(Rich immediately rewords himself)...they were all talking about school which I didn't want to talk about because I've been in school for so many years it's not interesting any more...(Rich pauses while audience laughs)...and uh, of course that happened after third grade...(more laughter from audience as Rich continues)...so I walked into town. It was about a five mile walk from the campsite down in...down the trail...down into town...and when I got there, I went in and was having a steak, and this guy started talking to me and we had this great conversation; we were having a good time and he said, "Hey look, it's dark and it's five miles up the road to your campground. Why don't I drive you up there?"

And I said, "Hey, great!"

And uh, so we got in his car and just as we pulled out from under the uh, last light in that town the guy said, "You know what, I should probably tell you that I'm gay."

And I said, "Oh!...I should probably tell you that I am a Christian."

...(audience applauds, but Rich continues...)

"...and Christians and gays are really a lot more alike than most people think."

And he said, "Well, what do you mean?"

And I said, "Well, I think that gay people are people who desperately need to be loved. And I think Christian people are pretty much the same."

...(audience applauds loudly)

And he said, "Well if you want out of the car..."

I said, "Why?"

And he said, "Well, I'm gay and your Christian."

I said, "It's still five miles and it's still dark."...I'm not crazy.

...(laughter from audience)

And he said, "I thought Christians hated gays."

I said, "That's funny, I thought Christians were supposed to love. I thought that was our first command." ... (audience applauds loudly again)

He said, "Well, I thought God hated gays."

I said, "That's really funny, because I thought God was love."

And He said, "Well uh, do think uh, God sent AIDS down to punish gay people?"

And I said, "Well, in the same sense that he sends bankruptcy on farmers and presidents on voters."

...(audience laughs at presidential remark and Rich pauses before saying...)

"...that there are consequences for our choices and sometimes we have to bear the consequence of other people's choices."

And then he asked me the big one. He said, "Do you think I will go to hell for being a gay?"

Well, I'm a good Hoosier...(audience laughs)...and I puckered up to say, "Yes, of course you'll go to hell for being gay." Now folks, I will tell you the truth. I got ready to say, "Yes, of course you'll go to hell for being gay," and when I opened up my mouth it came out, "No,...of course you won't go to

hell for being gay." And I thought, "Oh my god, I've only been in New Hampshire for one week and I've already turned into a liberal."...(audience roars out loud in laughter)...What am I going to tell this guy now?

You know there are times when we think we are God's messengers, when we think we are the mouthpiece of God. And God really needs fewer mouths than he needs ears...(audience cheers approvingly)...And there are times when we think we've got it all together. And we meet somebody. And they ask us the right questions. And we get to find out something about God that we learned when we were little because our moms and dads read it to us, and because they took us to Sunday school and we were told over and over the great truths of the scriptures. But we forget them because we get all caught up in how cool we are.

(Getting back to his story, Rich concludes...)

I said, "No, you won't go to hell for being gay any more than I would go to hell for being a liar. That nobody goes to hell because of what they do. We go to hell because we reject the grace that God so longs to give to us...(audience applauds)...regardless of what we do."

So many of you people try so hard to be good. And you think someday you're going to be so good that God is going to look down on you favorably. Well, let me tell you something. God already looks down on you favorably...(audience agrees by applauding)....That's what grace is...not because you have earned it but, because he is a favorable looking God. Some of you people are so afraid that someday you're going to cross that line, that you're going to do that one sin that God will never forgive you of...or, you're going to do that one sin that you've been doing so long...but, you have this feeling that there is a certain number of times you can get away with it and God can look away...but, one time too many and your life is over. Folks, God knew you at your worst before he ever sent Christ to die for you. And the good news of Christianity is not that...Christ came into the world to make good little boys and girls. Christ came into the world to take away those sins that you've allowed to come between you and God. It's sad to me to believe...to look out there and see...when you're driving down the road and you see people who are afraid, you see people who are angry, and you go, "If only you knew how crazy about you God was...God has already loved you...if only you knew!"

And so today...I'm...

(Rich pauses to tell everyone...)

...I don't know why I'm nervous as a cat about Beaker's wife having a baby. He doesn't seem near as nervous as I am. I'm about to wet myself up here thinking about it.

(Audience laughs and he continues...)

.....so I don't know if I can make a lot of sense in a lot of ways, but let me tell you this...that God will never give up on you. He will never stop loving you. That love is a reality no matter what you do or don't do. God does not call us to be angels; he calls us to be His, and to be who we are in Him. And uh, so this is a little prayer song that if you want to pray with us you're welcome to join in....

[Sometimes By Step] keyboard

(As he usually did, Rich ceases to play the keyboards during the last chorus of this song as the audience joins to sing with Rich acappella, "God, you are my God...and I will ever praise you" over and over. Then Rich deliberately walks off stage to leave the audience singing the remainder of the song on their own in a worshipful moment of praise to God.)

Remarks and transcription by [Lee McConnell](#)

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Keeping Up With the Amish

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/christianitytoday.html

Eric Miller

For my birthday, an old friend from college days takes me to the Michael Card concert. Card, long a voice of theological and intellectual integrity in the Christian music industry, opens with a few songs, followed by a tongue-in-cheek apology: "Some of you may have come expecting to see lasers and a light show," he remarks, "or at least a hair piece." But this is a no-frills concert: jeans, T-shirts, a bald head, and a lot of music. Glitter and glam didn't draw this crowd. We came for the promise of potent reflection on the meaning of the Word in our time.

More than three hours and many songs later, my friend and I seem reluctant to depart from the concert hall, unwilling to leave while we still feel the concert's residual glow staving off the night. Standing in a foyer, we continue our running conversation about Christians in the arts and the contemporary Christian music industry - CCM, as it is known - which exerts a sizable presence in our country. Triggered by the emotion of the concert, I find myself verging on passionate as we make our way toward the subject of Rich Mullins, a Christian artist who had died in a car wreck the previous summer. I had just read that according to Reed Arvin, his producer, Mullins kept an extensive journal of musings and confessions that rarely made it into the lyrics of his recorded songs; among these, said Arvin, were things Mullins "couldn't say in the Christian music world." Industry demands, tied as they are to (perceived) consumer taste and sensibility, quarantined more searching reflection and expression.

Learning this struck me deeply. I had admired Mullins as a singularly gifted man, a pilgrim who at times ushered listeners to the edge of the profound. His lyrics often carried the scent of the medieval monastery, unusual in CCM, or anywhere. How might his ability to evoke mystery and image the real have been heightened by a more accommodating artistic climate, I found myself wondering, trying to imagine songs and albums left unwritten. Subjected to this editorial surveillance, Mullins could only offer - so long as

he chose to work under the auspices of CCM - a guarded glimpse of himself, a publicity shot retouched by executives thinking more like advertisers than honest brokers. That glimpse we caught of the questing sojourner, it turns out, was a bit too polished and slick.

*My anger peaks as my friend and I exchange reflections on the consequences of this barren *modus operandi*. Like me, he as a youth immersed himself in the music of CCM artists like Mullins, hanging for the meaty fruit of honest encounters with God and self. Mullins stood high above many of the others with whom we spent so much time and energy, people to whom we looked for sustenance, inhabitants of an alternative universe that paralleled the poisonous world of mainstream popular music. We listened for an echo of our own experience in their arts. The older we grew the less we seemed to hear it. At first we heaped blame on ourselves for a spirituality that in this light seemed shabby; gradually, we came to sense that the image being delivered by CCM was not everything. The music and message that once seemed vital and genuine began to sound tinny and hollow. CCM, driven by the measure and ethos of the mass market, had found itself by the mid-1980s comfortably nestled on a procrustean bed, taking a stable of artists and legions of fans along with it.*

Our conversation moves naturally from Mullins to Mark Heard, a veteran of the CCM world for whose work both my friend and I have developed a deep affinity. Like Mullins, Heard's life came to an unforecasted end. After a remarkably productive career, in which he recorded 14 albums in as many years, he died in 1992 of a heart attack, 40 years old. Of the many Christian artists who fell under the influence of Francis Schaeffer during the 1970s and '80s, he had been the one who perhaps most energetically embodied Schaeffer's call for a theologically rooted social criticism wedded to scrupulous standards of artistic integrity. But by the mid-1980s, Heard and the magnates of CCM were heading toward divorce. Unwilling to adjust his work to the musical and theological standards of the industry, and frustrated with the pietistic bathos of the broader subculture to which his contractual obligations bound him, he struck out on his own as an artist and producer. With Dan Russell he formed an independent label, Fingerprint Records.

Between 1990 and 1992, Heard recorded three records on his Fingerprint label that unfailingly arrest the imagination, some of the most poignant artistic expression and theological reflection done by any Christian in the

last half of the twentieth century. His profoundly American music, folk-rock in the Appalachian vein, was so highly regarded by his peers that following his death, Russell compiled a double-CD album of 34 artists performing renditions of Heard's songs, largely taken from these last three albums; in 1995 an abridged version of the project, Strong Hand of Love, garnered a Grammy nomination. Artists ranging from CCM veterans Julie Miller and Phil Keaggy to rockers Michael Been and the Vigilantes of Love to singer-song writers Pierce Pettis and Bruce Cockburn paid tribute in song. They saw in Heard an artist whose ability was enormous, vision was profound, and commitment to honest self-revelation unparalleled.

Like Mullins, Heard's faith shaped his art, and in a remarkably unclichéd way. Like Mullins, he felt the squeeze of market demands as he struggled for self-expression and theological integrity. Unlike Mullins, Heard mounted an audible protest against these working conditions and the subculture that sanctions them; his last records became his testament of another way. On his final album, the white-hot Satellite Sky, Heard included "The Big Wheels Roll," a rollicking song in which he told the seemingly autobiographical tale of one man's long struggle to live out his calling in the context of corporate America. At the end of the song the man unleashes his rage:

*Damn the cool-headed and the setters of goals
Who can feel no evil, no heat, no cold
Who wouldn't know passion if it swallowed them whole
To whom true love is a left-brain risk
For whom the giving of life is a needless myth
Who cover their graves with monoliths
Cool heads prevail, and we'll become extinct
Mutants too unfit to wish
That's the fallout of our fingerprints*

By his life's end, Heard had come to believe that the regime of the market moguls represented not only a threat to his own vocation as an artist, but also to our very ability to live truly human lives. A harsh critique, to be sure, especially when etched so starkly. But is it accurate? Does it hit somewhere near the mark?

Just one randcid cluster of sour grapes, the Christian "realists" might retort, or, more charitably, the unfortunate downside of an economic system that has for the most part served as well. But tonight an opposite conviction gains strength inside of me, fueled by the concert and this conversation. I see embattled prophets denouncing bad-faith compromises with principalities that war against a more Godward vision of the created order. We are ceding ground that is rightfully his, with precious little protest. Nothing countermands these bottom-line dictates, no church, no theology, no god. Some might consider this a useful definition of idolatry.

Now outside the cloakroom, the conversation finally winding down, I feel a touch of guilt for my overly righteous dismissal of the world of CCM, which has indeed, these criticisms aside, served as a conduit for much that is life-sustaining and good, as our experience at this concert attests. But the stories of Mullins and Heard testify of a darker side of the curtain, where a demanding director with overweening authority sits. Theological reflection and honest confession, particularly in the potentially powerful form of art, are being misshaped and falsified.

The market yields a theology shaped not in the image of God but the "niche" to which it shamelessly panders. In this scheme, instead of imitating God, we mainly succeed in reproducing ourselves, our stature ever diminishing. Those so skilled at discerning consumer appetite would do well to heed evangelical social critic Os Guinness: In working out our own callings, we are to perform for one audience, the audience of One. The market must not be master.

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Palladium-Item Article

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/christian-musician-magazine-oct2197.html

Deeper Than Just Business

Rich Mullins, 1955-1997

Keith Bordeaux

Christian Musician Magazine

October 21, 1997

I have counted it as one of my life's greatest blessings to have known Rich Mullins, and have walked briefly with this man who struggled to be like Christ more honestly than anyone I have ever known. I have been asked to share my perspective as one who worked on Rich Mullins' behalf in booking dates at the William Morris Agency, and as his friend.

Those who knew Rich Mullins know that he loved to have some of his deepest and most focused discussions while going on walks. It was on such a walk on a humid night in Nashville in August of 1997 that Rich and I turned our conversation towards ministry. Rich shared with me some simple but profound thoughts on the subject. "Music is my occupation. My life is my ministry," he said. "Ministry is everyday. For example, how do I leave my hotel room when I check out? Do I leave dirty towels all over the place, empty cans on the floor? Do I leave the room destroyed so that when the maid comes in she thinks to herself, 'I am just a maid. My life is not important. I deserve this mess.'? Or do I pile my dirty towels in a corner and empty my own ashtrays? Do I clean up my trash so that when the maid comes in she thinks to herself, 'I am a maid. My life is important. I have dignity.'" Rich Mullins saw ways to share the love that Christ taught in the most ordinary daily routines and in so doing has challenged me to do the same. I believe that Rich lived as a pure example of what Paul described when he said, "To live is Christ, and to die is gain." Rich longed to be home. But he was determined to live as Christ taught while he was stuck down here in this mess. He had set up Kid Brothers of St. Frank to model the order that St. Francis had begun eight centuries ago and in so doing to model the life of Christ in a radical way. {Rich Mullins} always said that he was "too wimpy" to become Catholic and join the Franciscan Brotherhood. He took "unofficial" vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity. He limited himself to an extremely small monthly income and was generous with the rest of his money. He longed to know fully who he was in Christ and to increase his faith through his obedience. And he trusted St. Bonaventure when he said, "That heart is free that is held by no other love than the love of God." He longed to love purely.

I was with Rich Mullins at his home in New Mexico the weekend before his death. He had not been home in six months because of summer touring and he was excited to be back. He was like a child in his enthusiasm to show his guests everything about his life among the Navajo Nation. The trip was scheduled to be a planning time for the new project Rich would be recording. I was there with Judith Volz and Jim Chaffee from Myrrh Records, Rick Elias, who would be producing the album, and Jim Dunning, Jr., Rich Mullins' manager. By the first day, he had the entire weekend planned for us. He definitely wanted everyone to hear the new songs and he wanted to discuss direction for the album and touring. But his primary love was evident in the amount of time he had blocked for us to see the Navajo Nation.

We spent four hours on Friday discussing business and the rest of the weekend experiencing the reservation. We saw Window Rock, where the central government of the Navajo people is located. He took us hiking in Canyon de Chelly to experience the beauty and grandeur that inspired "Cry The Name". We slept in his hogans [hoe-GAHNS], traditional eight-sided Navajo dwellings. We picnicked with his Navajo and missionary friends, and we visited a museum for the Navajo Nation. One of the highlights of the weekend for me was late Friday night, lying on the futon in his trailer with him and Judith and watching his favorite movie, Brother Sun, Sister Moon about the life of St. Francis.

That beautiful weekend in New Mexico helped me to see Rich Mullins' heart even more clearly. He had such a strong desire to see the relevance of the Gospel of Christ made evident to the Navajo people. He shared several of his dreams with me. He had already been very involved in teaching the Navajo children and holding retreats and music programs. It was his dream to eventually assemble a choir of Navajo teens to travel the United States and to raise money for inner-city youth in poverty. This would give the Navajo youth a view of life outside of the reservation - a view that some never see - and also would give them a sense of dignity; that although they are in poverty, they could help others in the same condition.

Rich Mullins also spoke of organizing a camp to bring white and Navajo children together on the reservation. During the week the teachers would use diverse means to make the four individual gospel accounts relevant to the Navajo. He would do this by incorporating Navajo traditions into the teaching. For example, there are four sacred mountains bordering the Navajo Nation. There are four gospel accounts. Rich Mullins would apply one to each of the sacred mountains. The Navajo are a shepherding people in an arid region who have a real appreciation of water. Christ spoke endlessly of shepherding and of water. The hogans have eight sides. There are eight beatitudes, which, if we live by them and apply them to our lives, can be a strong shelter. It was inspiring to see how strongly Rich Mullins desired to see the gospel come alive in individual hearts. It wasn't

about a four step plan or a memorized presentation. It was about meeting a person where they are and sharing Christ's love in a real and tangible way.

For the most part, Rich Mullins had found a balance between business and ministry. Music was very important to him, but the financial gains were the means by which he was able to live the life he wanted to on the reservation. He looked at touring as a major way to fund the work he dreamed of doing with the Navajo. But it broke his heart when I told him that we would need to do a full fall tour next year in support of the new album. I had never seen Rich Mullins' spirit so deflated. He had planned to start the after school music programs for the kids on the reservation in the fall. This program had been pushed back for two years because of other conflicts and it was finally supposed to happen.

Rich took Eric, one of the Kid Brothers of St. Frank, on a walk in Chicago the Sunday before his death, to tell him that he felt that God was not going to allow him to be a hands on participant in the work on the reservation. He would not be able to actually do the work he had looked forward to for so long. In tears he told Eric that he felt that God was showing him that his gift was raising money through his music to support the work and wanted Eric to pray about heading up the after school programs for the youth.

As I write this article, it has only been four weeks since the accident. Today is October 21st and Rich Mullins would have been exuberantly celebrating his 42nd birthday on this day. We were to have a huge party at his Tennessee home just outside of Ashland City. Recording on the new album was scheduled to begin yesterday. They were to shoot the videos in Israel in January. And Rich Mullins would begin writing the book to release in conjunction with the album. So many plans had been made and the future looked so bright you had to squint to see it clearly. But God, in his divine mercy, had radically different plans.

Rich Mullins has been given the ultimate future - he has stepped into eternity. He is walking clothed in radiance - rid of the skin that he wrestled with for so long. He has met St. Francis - the greatest influence next to Christ on his spiritual life. He is sitting at the feet of Jesus. I know that {Rich Mullins} is far happier now than I could ever imagine, but I am stuck in this world of gravity where it is often hard to stand. Rich Mullins would be about getting on with life. The call of Christ is fresh in my ears. I will follow that call.

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CCM Magazine Article

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/praise-him-may98.html

Praise Him! Christian Music Stars Share Their Favorite Verses from Scripture Excerpts

Pages 155-164

Les Sussman

May 1998

[Editor's Note: Christian singer-songwriter Rich Mullins was killed in a car accident September 19, 1997, in Illinois. This interview was conducted several months before his death.]

Rich Mullins

"Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?

"Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?

"It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all."

-Ecclesiastes 7:16-18

Soundtracks play inside Rich Mullins' head that have less to do with his music and more to do with developing a deeper, heartfelt connection to the Lord.

Having struggled with everything from alcohol addiction to long years of "feeling tormented all the time," the Christian music superstar with the shoulder-length brown hair who today lives in a trailer on the Navajo Indian reservation in Window Rock, New Mexico, has had plenty of time to assess his struggles, the mysteries of faith, and the true meaning of being a Christian.

And what the forty-two-year-old Indiana native, who has garnered ten Dove nominations over the past decade, has concluded in his solitary search for God is that too many overrighteous Christians try to serve the Lord with an excess of doctrine rather than by simply opening their hearts to His love and light.

"The heart of Christian faith is a radical and reasonable trust and focus on Jesus,"

declares the popular singer and songwriter, who in 1997 was named Favorite Inspirational Artist by readers of Contemporary Christian Music Magazine. "But for many of us our focus has shifted very subtly from love for Jesus and faithfulness to Him and obedience to Him to a set of doctrines."

Rich asserts that the verse from Ecclesiastes serves to remind him to try to avoid such doctrinal extremes.

"Christianity is about a daily walk with this person Jesus," he proclaims, "and that's why I love Ecclesiastes. The gist of the whole book is just live - live out the will of God, and live abundantly."

Rich Mullins' voice takes on a tone of annoyance as he recalls a recent incident that illustrates what he believes is wrong with much of Christianity today.

"I was at a citywide youth rally, and one of the pastors at a meeting said 'We need to tell these kids about Jesus so that they'll stop getting pregnant, stop doing drugs, and doing all these things.'

"And I thought, 'Wow, we need to tell all these kids about Jesus because Jesus wants them to know about Him. It has nothing to do with their sexual conduct or with the management of their bodies or their minds. It has only to do with God so desperately wanting us to know that He loves us, that He incarnated Himself - He became Jesus - so that we can know that.'"

That type of heartfelt contact with the Lord is much of what Rich Mullins is all about, and he makes every effort to impart his feelings through his God-glorifying songs of faith and wonder.

"Jesus' message is not to be good boys and girls so that when you die you can go to heaven," he passionately proclaims. "The message of Jesus is 'I love you. I love you so deeply it kills me.'"

Letting that light into his own heart has been a long and arduous struggle for the Christian music star - one that involved "more than ten years of darkness where I felt tormented all the time."

Rich adds that his struggle is far from over, which is one reason why he is living on an Indian reservation in the first place - "to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling."

Although Rich recalls having always felt driven to know the Lord, the Cincinnati Bible

School graduate also painfully remembers how he often felt spiritually empty and separated from God's love - an emotion he today believes was induced by Satan.

"I've been in and out of all kinds of things - like self-depreciation, self-interest, ego trips, alcohol, and other addictions," he declares. "I've failed many times to avoid those kinds of temptations. But that's not what the Devil was really interested in. What he was trying to do is make me feel apart from God.

"You know, I was brought up in a very rationalistic kind of family - the idea of the Devil was a little outside of our thing. It's taken me a long time to recognize that there are spiritual forces who would like to harm us. Now I know that what Satan would like most to take from us is our true knowledge of who we are - which is children of God."

It wasn't instant revelation that helped the then thirty-year-old performer pierce the darkness with God's light, but instead, a series of "small steps" that included prayer, confession, and the reading of Scripture.

Rich recalls how one day he made an honest assessment of his life and found all the secret sins he was guilty of less than pleasing.

"I remember being on the road to Michigan and saying to myself, 'Oh, God, why don't you just make my car crash?'"

However, instead of crashing, Rich found himself steering his car in the direction of Cincinnati, where a couple of his good friends lived. It was there that Rich unburdened his soul and began to lighten his load.

"It was really liberating," he recollects. "My struggles with addictions and the darkness I was feeling lessened. There was a renewed feeling of intimacy with God."

Today, grateful to be on the road to spiritual recovery, Rich takes time out from his busy schedule to share the gift of faith with Navajo children on the reservation where he lives his Thoreau-like existence. "A lot of people think I've come here to save the Indians," he offers, "but it was a desire to feel God's love out of the American mainstream."

Whether onstage or off, Rich tries to spread the message that no matter how badly people may feel about themselves - as he once did - they are never unworthy of God's love and will never be abandoned by their Creator.

"Anytime that we focus on our performance, that in itself cuts us off from God - not successfully - because God's grace is greater than even our darkest sin," he declares.

"From my junior year of high school until age thirty I felt tormented all the time. I was depressed. I just think I have that sort of personality. Was I going to be kept from the Kingdom of God because I have a tendency to be morose? Or because you have a withered hand? Or because maybe you have some kind of chemical imbalance that leads to an addiction? You're not a Christian because of how you feel, you're a Christian because of what Jesus did for you."

The brown-eyed entertainer, whose laid-back stage presence often belies the spiritual intensity smoldering within him, is critical of "overrighteous" Christians who believe that only people who live so-called moral lives are eligible for salvation.

"Life and living comes from God - it comes from Jesus - not from doctrine or good morals," he declares. "You can be an utterly moral person and not be alive. Jesus came that we might have life, not good morals. It's not that I'm opposed to good morals at all, it's just that sometimes I think we put the cart before the horse."

Much of Rich's philosophy was shaped as a youngster growing up in the former Quaker settlement of Arba, Indiana. "About half the people who lived in Arba were relatives of mine." He chuckles. "My cousins lived there, my great-grandmother lived next door to us, and all my Sunday school teachers were my uncles and aunts.

"And one of my greatest influences in thinking about all this was my own father. My dad was very honest about who he was. He was very honest about his weaknesses and strengths. He never pretended to be something when he was in church that we knew he wasn't at home."

In contrast, Rich remembers himself as a kid who was almost "hyperpious. I remember being so embarrassed by him. Then puberty kicked in, and I became aware that all my piety - all of my devotion - was really very shallow. Somewhere deep inside me I was still very human. It was that human part of me that Jesus loved. It was not the phony part of me that I wore on the outside."

Although Rich will frankly admit that he is still not completely free from dark moments that sometimes grip his soul, nowadays he finds it easier to contend with those moments by turning to Scripture.

"This scripture has come into play so many times in my life when I've fallen into those moods and the temptation of evaluating myself and saying 'How am I doing?'

"It seems that God is always saying 'I'm not worried so much about how you're doing as much as I'm glad about who you are.' The scripture also says don't get too hung up in

your failures, your weaknesses, or your addictions - it doesn't make you separate from God, because He still loves you."

Rich remains convinced that Scripture is a powerful tool that can help heal others as it has helped heal him. "I hope that by reading this scripture they'll feel like I do. There are so many times I've said, 'Who am I trying to fool? I may as well just quit.' Or you might be thinking 'I just can't bear this.' Then I read this scripture and it helps.

"It's helped me because what it says is this is not about your righteousness. Your righteousness is all in Jesus. So don't get so hung up about how important you are in the Kingdom of God or how important you are to the growth of the church. Just figure out where you're most alive, most vital, and go there. Enjoy the gift of life that He's given you."

The popular Christian artist does, however, add one word of caution. He warns against placing too much emphasis on the words of Scripture rather than upon the One who inspired it.

"The goal is not that you should become a great Bible scholar," he asserts. "It's not about mere intellectual assent to a set of doctrines. The goal is that you should be like Jesus - and the Scriptures can help you with that. I don't need to read the Bible because I'm a great saint. I read the Bible because I'll find God there. It's about a daily walk with this person Jesus."

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Remembering Rich

 kidbrothers.net/articles/ccmmay98.html

Dave Urbanski

May 1998

Though [Michael W.] Smith admits that he and Rich Mullins "weren't that close," he spent his share of time with the misfit songwriter and was deeply affected by Mullins' life - and his death. That's clearly reflected by Smith's instrumental homage to Mullins ("Song for Rich") on Live the Life and his cover of "I See You" on the Exodus Project.

"When I heard the news, I was in Charlotte, N.C., getting ready to walk on before 15,000 people. And Randy Stonehill came back - Randy was my hero growing up and then we got to be friends - and he said, 'Man, I need to tell you something. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but Rich has moved on. He's left us.' I didn't understand. So he told me what happened, and I was just shocked, just sitting there in disbelief. I didn't cry. I was perplexed. [I'm thinking], 'I gotta go on in 15 minutes!' I opened up the show with 'Step by Step.' I didn't tell the audience - I didn't think I could do it. I got through the show, but when I was walking offstage, I started to lose it. And when I got backstage, I was just a wreck. I went on for an hour, uncontrollably weeping. 'Okay God... You're in control.'

"I just really, really miss him," Smith says quietly, his eyes again welling up with tears. "I find myself, now that he's gone... it still gets really hard. I sing his songs in concert, and I lose it... I just lose it. I don't know what it is, but [he] really affected me, made me reevalutate things. The guy was restless. And that's hopefully what I'm getting at. I actually thought about it today for the first time. There's so much I love about being here, and I love my family. I'd lay down my life for my kids, and I'd give up my career today if my family was suffering. But then I found myself - probably for the first time - saying, 'I'm restless. I don't belong here.' I just think [Rich] left an enormous legacy of who he was and what he stood for. If in some way I can carry on just a piece of that legacy, I think I [will have] accomplished a

lot."

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CCM Magazine Article

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Requiem for a Ragamuffin

April Hefner and Lindy Warren

CCM Magazine

November 1997

There is such a thing as glory, and perhaps no one knows it better now than Rich Mullins, Christian music's restless poet.

It seemed an impossible task, one that no one wanted to accept. Late September found family, friends and fans saying goodbye to Christian singer/songwriter Rich Mullins, who was killed in a car accident September 19 in Illinois.

Mullins and band member Mitch McVicker were traveling southbound in Mullins' Jeep on I-39 near Peoria to a benefit concert in Wichita, Kan., when, according to Illinois Highway Patrol Sgt. Gregory Jacobsen, "The Jeep lost control for no apparent reason, causing it to roll and eject the two men." A tractor-trailer, also traveling southbound, approached the accident shortly after it happened and swerved to avoid the Jeep in the middle of the lanes. "The rig then struck Mullins, who died instantly," Jacobsen said. It is not known who was driving or what caused the Jeep to fishtail. "Indications are that the two were not wearing seatbelts," Jacobsen said. The police report cited no witnesses.

McVicker, 24, a vocalist on *Heaven is Waiting* from the independent release *Canticle of the Plains*, suffered serious head and internal injuries. After 16 days in a Peoria hospital, McVicker was transferred to a rehabilitation facility in Kansas on October 6. He had recently recorded his own debut album with Mullins producing. (Cards can be sent to McVicker at 2728 SE Bennett Dr., Topeka, KS 66605.)

Mullins had recently signed with Myrrh Records and was scheduled to go into the studio in October with producer Rick Elias to deliver an album slated for June 1998. Mullins had already written and recorded the new songs on a rough work tape; a video and book were also anticipated. "Rich told me he had 10 songs about Jesus that really expressed his heart," said Myrrh Vice President Jim Chaffee. "When we've had an opportunity to work through the grieving process, Jim [Dunning, Mullins' current manager] and I will begin to discuss the appropriate way to move ahead with these songs."

Mullins was buried Sept. 25 in his hometown of Richmond, Indiana. The private funeral was attended by 300 family members and friends, including the first artist to cut one of his

songs, Amy Grant, who sang Somewhere Down the Road. Navajo children from the Window Rock, Ariz., reservation where Mullins lived at the time of his death surrounded his grave site, singing a song he taught them - Jesus Loves Me - in their native language.

"What we will remember most about Richard Wayne Mullins as the days and years go by is how he loved," said Kathy Sprinkle, a close friend of Mullins since their days together at Cincinnati Bible College. "Loved the children on the reservation, loved Compassion International. Loved his music, his family, his friends and his God. We will tell stories about our experiences, recall his laugh and know that he challenged each of us to a more true Christianity, a more authentic love. That was his mission; it now becomes his legacy."

On Sept. 26, members of Nashville's Christian music community honored Mullins with a two-hour memorial service at Christ Presbyterian Church. Friends recalled a man who was equal parts sinner and saint, a man who had no children of his own yet was responsible for feeding thousands around the world.

Musical tributes of Mullins' songs were offered by Michael W. Smith, who led the congregation in Awesome God and Step by Step, as well as by Ashley Cleveland (Elijah) and Phil Keaggy (Hold Me Jesus). Man of No Reputation, a favorite song of Mullins', was offered by its writer, Ragamuffin Rick Elias, and Grant sang her own Somewhere Down the Road.

A three-hour national memorial service in Wichita, Kan., brought more than 5000 people together Sept. 27 in Wichita State University's Henry Levitt Arena to celebrate Mullins' life and music. Music and stories were once again used to portray the patchwork quilt that was Mullins' life.

Dr. Steven Hooks, a favorite professor of Mullins' at Cincinnati Bible College, perhaps summed the evening up best: "The bandstand is dark, and the liturgy has been silenced-- forever some are saying - by the demon we call death. Do you really believe that? Let me tell you a little secret. Rich knew it well. He sang it often. It was the truth. It stood at the heart of his Creed, and it stands at the heart of the gospel: 'The dead in Christ shall rise.' ...As we gather tonight to honor Rich's passing over Jordan, some would seek to console us by reminding us that he will live on in his music and in our memories. But I'm here to tell you, he lives on."

Richard Wayne Mullins was born October 21, 1955 in Richmond, Ind., the third of John and Neva Mullins' five children. At the age of 4, he began playing piano, adding other instruments as he grew older, in part, he noted, because of his lack of athletic ability.

"I gravitated toward music [as a child]," Mullins once said in an interview, "but I was

always a bit of a nerd. I was terrible at basketball, and in Indiana, you need to be good in basketball to be socially fluent."

He graduated from Northeastern High School in 1974, and that same year Mullins moved to Cincinnati where he attended the conservative Cincinnati Bible College and continued to write and play music that represented his growing faith. When he left his position as a youth minister for a local Methodist church, Mullins joined Zion Ministries and performed with its band at church retreats around the country. In 1981, the group performed at Nashville's Koinonia Coffeehouse, and Reunion Records' Mike Blanton heard a tape. Soon thereafter, he signed Mullins to an exclusive publishing deal, and Amy Grant cut his song Sing Your Praise to the Lord on her Age to Age album.

After a few years of solo performances, Mullins put together his own demo and was signed to a recording deal in 1983 with the then Blanton and Dan Harrell-owned Reunion Records. He released his first, self-titled album in 1986. In 1988, and much to the chagrin of his record label, Mullins moved to Wichita to pursue a degree in music education at Friends University and to be discipled by Maurice Howard, a pastor at Central Christian Church who died three months after Mullins arrived.

Nevertheless, Mullins was hooked on Kansas, a state that would turn up often in his songs. He lived with long-time friend and fellow musician Beaker until Beaker's marriage in 1993. Mullins then moved in with Friends' campus chaplain and theology professor Jim Smith and his family.

"You can't imagine how intimidating it is to have Rich Mullins in your theology class," Smith said. "It's a little like having Einstein in your physics class - you want to hand him the chalk and just sit down.... He changed my life, and he became my friend."

Mullins graduated from Friends in 1995 and moved to Window Rock to teach music to children on the Navajo reservation. For the past nine years, Mullins had devoted much of his time to Compassion International and within the last three, had focused strictly on ministry to Native Americans in the Southwest.

In lieu of cards and flowers the Mullins' family has asked for donations to Compassion International. Contact 800/334-KIDS or Rich Mullins Memorial, Compassion International--USA Program, P.O. Box 7000, Colorado Springs, CO 80933.

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Rich Mullins - As Best As I Can Remember Him, Vol. 1

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/ccmnov97.html

Bernie Sheahan

September 25, 1997. I'm thinking today of an Irish legend about St. Patrick. It's said that he broke the law by kindling a fire on Easter Eve (during a pagan holiday), and when he was brought before the High King he thundered up the hill singing the 20th Psalm: "Some trust in horses, and some in chariots, but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God..."

My friend Rich Mullins would have done that. Barefoot, maybe.

It was his passion - his "one thing" - to proclaim the holy, reckless, raging fury of the love of God. Rich had a heart for native peoples, as evidenced by his commitment to the Native American and specifically the Navajo Nation, where most recently he lived among them in Arizona, following his dream of teaching music to children. And so he was like Patrick, venturing forth into an unknown place, a place he loved in his soul, a place that felt like home even though he was from somewhere quite different, among people not of his bloodlines.

St. Patrick, the most famous Irishman of all, wasn't Irish. (He was from Britain.) Rich Mullins, I have to tell you, wasn't of Native American descent. (He was Irish and French, but he tanned well, and that fooled people.)

Yet he was a native of this land, and as American as they came, a patriot whose love for his country could make him curse the politicians who he felt were doing it damage. He loved every road he traveled, and I think he traveled them all, from Maine to the Mexican border. He insisted on driving to his concerts instead of hiring a tour bus, loving as he did the independence of the open road, the hum of the highway, the vibration under his hands on the wheel. In the end, it's what took him for us, robbed those who loved him and those who only loved his music (though they were inseparable) of a treasure that is absolutely, maddeningly

irreplaceable: his presence in this world.

Our friend Rich Mullins is gone from this place, and though I know he's beside himself with joy, home at last, questions answered in an instant, I miss him now. And I'm not sure I can stand the thought of life without him.

How did I meet Rich Mullins? He just showed up one day, in my kitchen, back in 1982. I was sharing a house with John and Pam Mark Hall; Pam was a Christian music pioneer and a genius of a songwriter who eventually became Rich's labelmate at Reunion Records. And then there was this scruffy looking guy from Cincinnati, a songwriter of course. He was wearing torn army fatigue pants, a dirty T-shirt and a goofy grin. My first thought: questionable personal hygiene. I sort of knew he was there before I walked in the room, due to a certain Boy Scout-on-a-four-day-Jamboree aroma that, as it turned out, was not so unusual with Rich, along with patchouli oil and other distinctive fragrances (including soap, more often than we give him credit for).

That year, Mullins would pop in unannounced and pitch his tent in the backyard for a month at a time. We'd talk by the fire till all hours about God, movie, music, books (he read aloud from G.K. Chesterton's Orthodoxy, his lifetime favorite; if you haven't read it, do). During that time, he ate Pam's great cooking and collaborated with her on some of my favorite songs, ever. I'll never forget the day the two of them emerged from a writing session downstairs, saying, "You gotta hear this song..."

*Oh sparrow watcher
Lover of the flowers
Heavenly Father
Keeper of the stars
We come now with hunger
We come now with thirst
Clothe us in your glory
Feed us on your word...*

It was the tender, majestic "Sparrow Watcher (which Pam later recorded with Amy Grant and Kathy Troccoli), and for the first of many times over the course of our 15-year friendship, I heard Rich say, head tucked and brown eyes wide and hopeful, "Do you like it? Do you really like it?"

It was that little-boy innocence, shining on that weathered, older-than-his-years face, that endeared him most to me. On a damp, gray, Saturday in December 1990, as part of a choir of friends that sang on "Step By Step," I watched him in the control room as he nearly burst with joy at the sound of us at worship, leaking heaven onto analog tape, with a song - something he and his best friend Beaker had crafted together, like a musical model airplane.

Shortly thereafter, Rich and Beaker insisted on taking me road-tripping to Cincinnati, their favorite city, where every beloved old haunt brought that Christmas-morning excitement to Rich's face, and Beaker's too. For four days, I was part of the Abbott and Costello, Paul and Silas, David and Jonathan phenomenon that was their friendship.

I'll always remember that February trip to Cincinnati. Together, we three heard cathedral bells peal, devoured the famous Skyline chili, and took in the confluence of the two great rivers from a hilltop churchyard at the top of steep granite steps.

Knowing my fondness for old train stations, Rich couldn't wait to show me the restored Cincinnati Union Terminal. With an unguarded sweetness, he picked out a just-right souvenir for me in the gift shop, a photo book on the station's history. Then it was off to the lobby to demonstrate the "way-cool" acoustical trick involving the station's 106-foot-high rotunda. It might just be my most precious memory of Rich, hearing that gee-whiz whisper from the other side of the cavernous lobby, delighted as he was with the wonder of sound and the joy of surprising a friend.

Rich couldn't put all of his consistently contradictory life into his songs, nor did he try. Though so many of us can say, "He seemed to know what I feel," a closer look at his lyrics doesn't reveal the kind of navel-gazing personal angst one might find elsewhere. Blood, yes. Sweat, yes. Tears, of course. Mostly, the piercingly poetic love of God, squeezed through heart and soul and some unearthly vision he had in his head, and, as my pal Carolyn Arends wrote, "they rhymed."

God is what he wanted you to get, not him. And that's what we got. How many of us - raise your hands - put on a Rich Mullins CD when nothing else will do, when we need comfort in our grief (even, yes, over him right now), strength in our troubles, and joy in our dark days? How many of us

know that Rich Mullins seems to disappear from the picture when we hear these songs, and God Himself appears, bright, clear, present in our need, whatever it is?

I cannot remember too many other times in my long history with Christian music that I was so unaware of the artist standing before me on the stage or coming through the stereo speakers. Rich got out of the way, and let God, the "reckless, raging fury," the unexplainable, undeniable, unfathomable grace of God, pour forth and touch us where we needed to be touched.

If Rich was a stranger to you, then I wish you could have known him. He didn't stay a stranger long, wherever he went. He swept people up in a warm whirlwind of inclusion ("You wanna go to the movies?"), and was just as happy to talk crop prices with a farmer or get into a theological half-nelson with a college chaplain - or the other way around. To him, it was all the same; he was on equal footing with simple folk and scholars, drinking in earth and heaven, seeing God's relentless tenderness (to quote Rich's friend Brennan Manning) in both. His best prayer partner was the deaf infant daughter of a friend, his best companion, whoever he was with right then (there was no such thing as a "nameless" fan; he was known to send thoughtful postcards from the road to anyone who'd taken the time to write).

He was the naked man, God's own fool, kept clothed and sane by really believing what Jesus said on a Palestine hillside about the flowers and birds and not worrying about tomorrow. He could be delightfully childlike or exasperatingly childish; kind or cantankerous, he could fling his hands heavenward in an explosion of joy, or nearly cave in on himself from the silent pressures of his private hell (sometimes in the same day).

He was a bundle of paradox, but he was a bundle of the sort spoken of in Scripture about David, another man of human failings who knew his desperate need for God. Listen to this, from I Samuel 25:29:

"And should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, then the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God, but the lives of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling."

I like that. It's tender and comforting to me, if I think of it this way: that

Rich's life is bound in the bundle of those who are living, really living, with the Lord our God. I have to admit that I wish he were still here in the shadowlands with us, helping us see through the glass, however darkly.

Rich Mullins, age 41, of Richmond, Ind., Cincinnati, Ohio, Atlanta, Ga., Bellsburg, Tenn., Wichita, Kan., Window Rock, Ariz., and points in between (including the Appalachian Trail, Guatemala, Columbia, Korea, Ireland, a hundred La Quinta Inns, and numerous tents), helped me - us - make sense of the world.

I am supposed to be telling you how he came to be in it, and what he did while he was here. But if you want the official biography, you'll have to look elsewhere, because the details, the wheres and the whens, don't seem as important as the way he lived them. He told us the facts in his songs, anyway: He was a good Midwestern boy... he grew up around Indiana, Reid Memorial is where he was born, his father could make things grow out of Indiana clay, his mother could make a gourmet meal out of just cornbread and beans... they and his two brothers and two sisters shared one bathroom... you get the drift.

He loved them all with the quiet, fierce loyalty of a farm boy. He was proud of his Quaker roots, proud of his Kentucky Appalachian forebears, and he honored that heritage in his music.

You might think Indiana is a dull place to live. Kansas, all the more so, if you've only seen it while driving endless interstate miles to Colorado, maybe. Rich had no choice about Indiana (though he loved it all the same), but Kansas? Why he chose to live on a windswept prairie baffles most people, except those of us with Kansas roots. Out there, you can be swallowed up in a starfield or a sunset behind and before you, 360 degrees...

*And over Kansas the whole universe was stilled
By the whisper of a prayer...
And the single hawk bursts into flight
And in the east the whole horizon is in flames
I feel the thunder in the sky
I see the sky about to rain
And I hear the prairies calling out Your name...*

I've been spending time at my grandfather's house my whole life, not 30 miles from where Rich camped in a teepee on producer Reed Arvin's parents' land. And though I've always loved the prairie with raw passion, that feeling went undefined until Rich put it into song, and Reed, a native son, colored it with sounds that matched his own Kansas memories:

*From the place where morning gathers
You can look sometimes forever 'til you see
What time may never know...
How the Lord takes by its corner this old world and shakes
us forward - shakes us free...*

And...

*Look down upon this winter wheat
And be glad that You have made
Blue for the sky and the color green
That fills this earth with praise...*

It's something like the ocean, the green of winter wheat, undulating in waves in the relentless Kansas wind. It can take your breath away, with its stark beauty, and you won't ever see that from the interstate on the way to Colorado, unless you stop and look.

Rich Mullins had a way of making us do that. He taught us how to see. Pay attention, his music said, as did his life. Look at this! Smell that! Breathe deep, taste the salt in the air, feel the sand between your toes. See the wonders of His works, and drink them in like putting your face under a waterfall after a long hike. Shake your fist at the storm, cry at the sunrise, laugh as the rain soaks you. Let your heart be broken with compassion when you see a suffering stranger, then do something about it. And give thanks to the Giver of all these good gifts. Above all, sing your praise to the Lord, come on, everybody, for indeed, our God is an awesome God.

You could sit in your car, in traffic, and get a glimpse of Glory, listening to a Rich Mullins song. There is such a thing as glory, as Rich sang, and if

there's anything that he would probably want us to remember about him, it's that he reminded us of that glory.

September 29, 1997. God's glory is pronouncing itself in the wind, and the Tennessee hills are still green. It's Monday, after a terrible, wonderful week of soul-shredding grief and exquisite pain, mingled ever so marvelously with deep, abiding joy and healing laughter. The life of Rich Mullins has been celebrate with great gusto and quiet reflection in several places: a small gathering of family and intimates in Richmond, Ind., where the winds of heaven blew the stuff of earth around a country cemetery and warmed the red clay that was his grave. In Nashville, both an Irish pub and a Presbyterian church gave friends space for healthy grieving, remembering Rich, remembering the God who both gave him to us and took him home. Saturday in Wichita, about 5000 people stood and sang out the musical legacy of a man who loved the wheat fields and the homeless wanderer with equal abandon. Countless thousands around the world are no doubt remembering him, too, thankful for the songs that set their hearts toward heaven, carved out of a life that was more painfully human than most of us will allow ourselves to be.

That's it. That's what Rich left us. For all his vices and virtues (and he said often that the virtues could be worse if they kept us from being passionate about God), he was more aware of God's mercy, more wholly given over to the pursuit of God than anyone any of us knew.

Correction. I think Rich would say he was given over, or tried to be, anyway, less to the pursuit than to the being caught.

He had much to say about that in his 41 years. I'm thankful, as we all are, that there were people along his way that knew that, that made it possible for him to play those songs and record them, to take them on the road and share them with the rest of us. Many of those people tell their stories in this tribute (mercifully, his best friend/soulmate Beaker and longtime manager Gay Quisenberry have been invited to do so in this magazine at a later, less trying time). Others were quiet contributors to his life and only they know what was exchanged between them. Rich would probably want all the waitresses and Navajo children and piano teachers and youth pastors and priests and neighbors and friends to get their chance to tell what they'd seen of God together.

Later in his life, he got the chance (thanks to his dear friend and former

Release magazine editor Roberta Croteau, who insisted he write a column) to put his own thoughts in print, to tell stories unconfined by meter and rhyme and melody.

Reading those now, as with his lyrics, gives a chill at the back of the neck, and you wonder if he knew that his sojourn on earth would be a short one. From "The Big 4-Oh!" he jokes about turning 40 and missing his chance for the "romantic... mystique of having an untimely death," then muses that Paul had "the perfect take on the plusses and minuses of life and death - 'to live is Christ, to die is gain'..."

In another column, he tells us something about "those moments" that were the hallmark of his life and work, moments of doing something with "your fullest attention, aware of your deepest joy." As I think of Rich, barefoot on the streets of gold, every last longing met, laughing and enjoying God's presence in the happy company of all God's ragamuffins - including King David, Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, Mother Teresa, Paul, St. Francis, and yes, St. Patrick (I'm imagining Rich singing "The Color Green" for him and asking, "Do you like it? Do you really like it?"), I am compelled not to canonize him, nor to cling too tightly to his memory, but to embrace for myself anew those moments of deep joy, those reminders of God.

"No wonder we love those moments and want them to linger," Rich wrote. "But for now they can't, so we must let them go. They are the flicker of some holy flame, a twinkling of an eye wherein the dead come alive again. Remember them, thank the Lord for them, but move on into the next moment and be present in it. It is God's present to you."

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Rich Mullins - In His Own Words

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/ccmnov97b.html

Rich Mullins

When Rich Mullins opened his mouth - be it to sing or to speak - people listened. And well they should, since pearls of great wisdom and truth dropped from those Irish lips as often as the biting witticisms for which he is famous. What follows is a small sampling of Rich on Rich taken from a variety of sources including CCM Magazine, Reunion Records press materials, the Pursuit of a Legacy video, Rich's own writings, Release magazine, American Songwriter magazine, and interviews with writers Warren Anderson, Nancy VanArendonk, and Lou Carlozo. Thanks to all who contributed or gave us reprint permission.

Faith

"I feel like God's leading me out, so I'm kind of sleeping with my shoes on. When God parts the sea, you don't want to say, 'Oh rats, where are my sandals?'"

"The amazing thing about the whole joy of Christianity is it's something you can't find, it's something that has to find you. Once we submit ourselves to God, the things of God stifle the Spirit. We can thwart the work of God in our own lives. We can choose to nourish that which should be crucified and ignore that which should be nourished, but God ain't done with any of us."

"Faith is walking with God. The biggest problem with life is that it's just daily. You can never get so healthy that you don't have to continue to eat right... Spiritually, we're in much the same place... It's not what you did, and not what you say you're going to do, it's what you do today."

"Our faith becomes real when we focus on what never changes instead of our ever-changing opinions."

God

"God doesn't have to be good to anybody. He doesn't owe us the breath we breathe. I figure if God has given us salvation, that's way more than we deserve, and I won't judge Him for not giving me something else."

"For me the greatest joy that I have is knowing that I do have a Father who loves me, and that He doesn't love me in a passive way. That He loves me so much that He sent Christ to take away the guilt of my sin, and that it is a real thing, that it really did happen. If I will experience joy in this life, it will be when I let other people know that there is a God who loves them, and He has taken away the sin that separates them. There is no greater joy than just that proclamation."

"Psychobabble is that language spoken by sailors who become so interested in navigating their way around the boat that they've forgotten to read the stars and the sea. They may be able to get from the galley to the head, but they will be lost in their journey from point to port. Jesus being God is the perfect picture of who God is. Jesus being man is the picture of perfect humanity. To find Him, to meditate on Him is to find God and our own true selves. It is to see the brilliant design of the boat and its course and the beauty of the sea."

Life

"I tend to think success is overrated, that it's something everybody goes after until they get it, then nobody knows what to do with it."

"I take comfort in knowing that it was the shepherds to whom the angels appeared when they announced Christ's birth. Invariably throughout the course of history, God has appeared to people on the fringes. It's nice to find theological justification for your quirks."

"If you're a plumber, and you become a Christian, you don't quit being a plumber [to] become a preacher. You become a great plumber because your work is infused by your faith."

"If I have to have perfect people in order to have friendships, I'm going to be a very lonely guy."

"There are all kinds of things that are pushed on us, and we have no say over. And they shape the way we see everything. Because I grew up in Indiana, in the Protestant tradition, in fact in the Quaker tradition - that had

a lot to do with biasing me. That's going to have an effect on the way that I interpret the Scriptures; that's going to give me my perspective. And I need to be aware of what my perspective is, so I can both appreciate it and be a little distrustful of it."

"My take on [single life] is, for those people who are too weak to handle celibacy, God gives a spouse. People who are too weak to handle a spouse, God gives celibacy. I'm pretty comfortable, and I wouldn't mind being married, especially from 10 to 2... but I also believe that if you're not happy where you are, you're not going to be happy anywhere."

"Until you come to terms with your heritage, you'll never be at peace with yourself."

"God has called us to be lovers, and we frequently think that He meant us to be saviours. So we 'love' as long as we see 'results.' We give of ourselves as long as our investments pay off, but if the ones we love do not respond, we tend to despair and blame ourselves and even resent those we pretend to love. Because we love someone, we want them to be free of addictions, of sin, of self - and that is as it should be. But it might be that our love for them and our desire for their well-being will not make them well. And, if that is the case, their lack of response no more negates the reality of love than their quickness to respond would confirm it."

The Ragamuffins

"They're not cute. They're slightly nuts. They have enough of a musical identity that they make lousy studio musicians 'cause they kind of are who they are, and that comes through in what they play. They're guys who have been real honest with me about who they are and about their shortcomings and about their failures and even about their failure to want to do any better. [Because] when I get down to it, the bottom line of every confession I have to make is, 'Lord, I don't really want to love you. I don't even have the desire to do that.' Unless God intervenes, I never will."

Music

"The thing that's cool about music is how unnecessary it is. Of all things, music is the most frivolous and the most useless. You can't eat it, you can't drive it, you can't live in it, you can't wear it. But your life wouldn't be worth

much without it."

"[This concert] won't be very different from concerts I've given in recent years. If you've liked what I've done in the past, you'll like this. If you haven't, you should go to a movie."

"I would hope that when someone comes in contact with me or my music that they would be caught in a sense of wonder. Not that they would have a sense of wonder, but that a sense of wonder would possess them. And I hope that they would be enveloped with a sense of joy. Joy is a very enduring quality. If it ever flies over you, it does change you forever."

"I think in a lot of ways, what I'm hoping to do in a concert, what I'm hoping with... every album is to help [people] come to terms with the fact that they are human, with the fact that they are alive."

"I always try to put Scripture references [in album liner notes] just because it doesn't matter what I say. I mean, ultimately, I can only tell you about my own experience.... I put the verses by the songs [to say], 'This is where it's taken me, but you go back and look at this and see what it says, and let it take you where it's going to take you. Bring your own perspective to this.'"

"Most instruments you get to strum, but [my 58-string hammered dulcimer] I get to strike. My therapist tells me I'm saving thousands of dollars."

"Any imbecile should be able to produce good music on a million-dollar budget. Great music is a matter of give and take."

"People listen to contemporary Christian music, and they take it so seriously. I'm in contemporary Christian music, and I don't know nothing. If you want spiritual nourishment, go to church."

"You have to have a certain shamelessness to write. You have to be willing to drop your pants in front of anyone that might want to look. And you don't do that because you're proud of it, you do that because you have to write. It's not a choice.... You write because you have no other option."

Death

"St. Francis is a big hero of mine, and Francis reminded himself daily that he would be dead. I think that while we live, the one sure thing about being alive is that we will die. Everything else is kind of 'iffy.' I mean, you may get

rich, you may be poor. You may have a job tomorrow, you may not. Nothing is sure in life except that you will be dead. There's something really great about living in the awareness that we will someday die. For one thing, that makes all that is hard about life more endurable because we know it will pass, and it makes all that is good about life that much more valuable because it will pass. So I think that it teaches us to not hold on to things, to live with some sort of detachment. Not the sort of detachment where we are unmoved, but the sort of detachment where we allow ourselves to be moved easily and quickly, but we don't try to possess those things that move us."

"I just figure we're all gonna be dead someday anyway. You may as well go one way as the other. If you're overly obsessive about health, then you're dead already. What problem do you have that [death] wouldn't fix?"

"My favorite song that I've ever written is 'Elijah.' I wrote it around the time when John Lennon was shot. He was a big hero of mine, and my great-grandma died about the same time. I began thinking about the influence both of those people had on my life, and they were dead. These two people would never know the impact they had on me; John Lennon I'm sure would never care to know, but my great-grandma, I never got to tell her. But then I realized I don't have to tell her. She didn't do what she did to have some kind of an impact on me. She did what she did because that's who she was. And I'm going to be dead someday too, and I wanna die good."

"I hope that I would leave a legacy of joy, a legacy of real compassion because I think there is a great joy in compassion. I don't think that you can know joy apart from caring deeply about people - caring enough to actually do something."

In 1989, aspiring songwriter Matt Barnard wrote to ask Rich Mullins how to get involved in Christian music. Here's his oh-so-Mullins' response:

Winston Churchill is famous for a lot of things and because of his fame, his advice to the student body at his alma mater is famous as well. He just said to them simply, "Never ever ever ever ever give up!"

I am not so famous, but if I could tell you something about getting into writing for Christian artists or growing up in Jesus or whatever, I would summarize a letter Paul the Apostle wrote to the Saints in Ephesus. I would

say to you, "BE FAITHFUL."

Remember, God sees the big picture and is working in you to create something UNIMAGINABLY great. It is God who does the work and to an end that He alone knows. I do not know if you will be writing for Russ Taff or Amy Grant someday. Make every effort to let the desire of your heart be to write for the Lord. Write honestly. Write the truth as best as you know it. Do not be preoccupied with writing. That will choke out your ability to see what should be written. Be preoccupied with the task and privilege of following the Lord and write as you go. "Throw your bread upon the water..." Sing to those who need to be sung to. Memorize for yourself Psalm 137:4-6: "How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy."

If "Jerusalem" is your desire, Nashville will be just a layover. You can take it or leave it. Be faithful.

Be God's!

Rich Mullins

"As a disclaimer to everything I've ever said or everything I ever will say, when it's all said and done we'll only have two things left to say: One is 'Forgive me' and the other is 'Thank you.'"

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Fans Say Goodbye

 kidbrothers.net/articles/ccmnov97c.html

In only the first week after his death, CCM Magazine's online site received hundreds of E-mail messages and letters from over 40 states and nine different countries around the world, all responding with story after story of how lives were impacted by Rich Mullins and his music. The following are excerpts from a few of those letters, all of which have been forwarded to the Mullins' family:

I feel like I'm looking at an unfinished portraits. The black lines of interviews and liner notes outline an image of his face. His lyrics add the shadows and bring depth to the painting. Then his music adds splashes of color: deep, melancholy browns, bright sensual oranges, reflective blues, and the yellows of worship. The painting isn't very clear. The only thing evident is that his face is turned toward the Savior in a mix of repentance and worship. Rich, the stuff of earth no longer competes for the allegiance we owe only to do Giver of all good things. Well done, Rich Mullins, well done.

~Mark Whitlock (Little Rock, AR)

"John be God's." Those three words were written on the cover of my copy of Never Picture Perfect at a concert I attended in 1991 in West Palm Beach, Florida. Today as I look at those words, just above Rich's signature, I can't help but think of the irony. For Rich was God's. Rich Mullins, unlike anyone I can think of, was utterly devoted to his Lord. He did not draw attention to himself. I was challenged by his words then. I am haunted by them now. Yet as I grieve, I don't grieve as one who has no hope. "John be God's." I will be God's, Rich. Not for you - I know you wouldn't want that - but for the God whose awe you proclaimed so faithfully.

~John L. Moody (Lake Worth, FL)

Rich Mullins' words and music have been, and will continue to be, like a mirror that reflects the cracks of inadequacy in our lives, but at the same time opens those cracks to the abounding grace of God the Father. The legacies of Rich's sojourn reach far and wide.

~Boyd Williams (Australia)

In 1989, I gave birth prematurely to a baby girl, and for the first time in my life I prayed: "God, if you save my baby's life, I'll find out more about you." Over the next two-and-a-half hours I watched the monitors go from red to green. My baby lived, and I started going to church with my best friend and her husband, who begged me to come to one of Rich's concerts. While waiting in the lobby, I stood by the front door wanting to leave so badly I could scream. This guy came up to me and said, "You don't look like you really want to be here." I told him that my idea of a great evening did not include rolling in the aisles. Then he said, "Well, I don't blame you. I wouldn't want to spend my evening doing something I didn't want to do either, but maybe when your friend gets here, you will listen to a little bit of the music and enjoy it." He excused himself and went away. A few minutes later Rich walked onto the stage and I almost fainted. "That's the guy I was talking to out in the lobby!" During that concert Rich talk about basic faith - how just sitting on a tractor in the middle of a cornfield watching a storm come his way, he could see the hand of God and how awesome it was to observe it in action. That night touched my heart, and the Holy Spirit started chipping away at the walls I had built. I spoke with Rich for about four hours later that night, and he answered a lot of my questions. I know that Rich was the avenue God used to bring me and my daughter into the kingdom.

~Sandy Carol (Hawthorne, CA)

Clearly, the world is broken. My hands are shaking. I'm bawling in a crowded, stuffed, overheated, and pretentious cafe. Here is how an artist attains immortality: he becomes the conduit for the things that etch into souls. Here, without realizing it, with the subtlety of an angel, there is a deep groove in the soul of Beverly White which Rich carved. I doubt he ever knew my name, or could have known the solace his art afforded me on blackest nights. I am without right to grieve or mourn in any profound way; we never met. But I am one to do things I have no right to do, and the keyboard will be stained with salt by the time I stagger home.

~Beverly R. White (Ontario, CA)

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CCM Update Article

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/ccm-update-oct0697.html

Memorials for Rich Mullins Balance Laughter with Tears

Nashville Service Encourages Healing

April Hefner

CCM Update

October 6, 1997

During recent memorial services, family, friends and fans said goodbye to Christian artist Rich Mullins, who was killed in a car accident Sept. 19 in Illinois. Mullins was buried Thursday, Sept. 25 in his hometown of Richmond, Indiana. The private funeral was attended by 300 family members and close friends, including the first artist to cut one of his songs, Amy Grant, who honored Mullins with her song, Somewhere Down the Road. Navajo children from the Window Rock, N.M., reservation where Mullins lived at the time of his death, surrounded his grave site, singing a song he taught them - Jesus Loves Me - in their native language.

"Most of us here today know Rich as brother, nephew, uncle, son or friend," said Kathy Sprinkle, a friend of Mullins since their days together at Cincinnati Bible College. "And that is what we will remember most about Richard Wayne Mullins as the days and years go by - how he loved. Loved the children on the reservation, loved Compassion International. Loved his music, his family, his friends and his God. We will tell stories about our experiences, recall his laugh and know that he challenged each of us to a more true Christianity. That was his mission; it now becomes his legacy."

On Sept. 26, members of Nashville's Christian music community honored Mullins with a two-hour memorial service at Christ Presbyterian Church. Gay Quisenberry, Mullins' manager for 12 years, spoke frankly on how this event, though tragic, would make Mullins proud as relationships long-severed were mended. "I want you guys to know that Nashville was hard for Rich," said Quisenberry, "but he didn't hate it here. I think he was just more scared here than anywhere ... It's no surprise to any of you that this world was a struggle for Rich, but he's healed. And today is about healing. Somebody said that [his death] is really hard because you miss him, and you want to tell him things. Well you know what I thought? Tell them to each other. Not what you thought of Rich, but what you think of each other. Seeing your faces is healing for me. I've been in [Christian music] for 17 years, and I'm praying, 'God, is this a ministry or a business?' And He told me, 'It's a family.' "

Musical tributes were offered by Michael W. Smith (Awesome God and Sometimes by Step), Ashley Cleveland (Elijah), Rick Elias (Man of No Reputation), Grant (Somewhere Down the Road) and Phil Keaggy (Hold Me Jesus). Personal thoughts were offered by Mullins' longtime producer Reed Arvin, members of his Ragamuffin band, friends and industry associates.

A three-hour national memorial service in Wichita, Kan., coordinated by Cheryl Hurley of Broomtree Productions with assistance from Central Christian Church and KTLI-FM (which broadcast the service live on the air), brought more than 5,000 people together Sept. 27 in Wichita State University's Henry Levitt Arena. Central Christian's Praise Band, many of whom had toured with Mullins, led attendees in several of the late artist's favorite hymns as well as his own praise choruses.

While many of Mullins' close friends offered tributes, it was Dr. Steven Hooks, a favorite professor of Mullins at Cincinnati Bible College, who perhaps summed the evening up best. "The bandstand is dark, and the liturgy has been silenced - forever some are saying - by the demon we call death. Do you really believe that? Do you really think that Rich has written his last lyric and played his last melody? Let me tell you a little secret. Rich knew it well. He sang it often. What empowered his service and inspired his songs? It was the truth. It stood at the heart of his Creed, and it stands at the heart of the Gospel: 'The dead in Christ shall rise.' ...While the moment of death may be shrouded in mystery, the final outcome is not. It is settled once and for all by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we gather tonight to honor Rich's passing over Jordan, some would seek to console us by reminding us that he will live on in his music and in our memories. But I'm here to tell you, he lives on."

CCM Magazine's November issue will feature a special cover story tribute to Mullins' life and music. At press time a "Navajo"-style memorial service had been scheduled for Monday, October 13 in Window Rock, and Compassion International was also planning a service to honor the late artist.

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Rich Mullins: 1955-1997

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/charlotte.html

November 1997

A few minutes before 10pm on Friday, September 19, 1997, Rich Mullins met The Maker Of Noses. The poet laureate of Contemporary Christian music and 24 year-old protégé Mitch McVicker were traveling from Chicago to Wichita for a Saturday night concert when they were involved in a highway accident. McVicker sustained severe head injuries and was hospitalized in serious condition.

Along with shocked and grieving family and friends, Rich Mullins is survived by a ten-year body of music that beautifully - and painfully - articulates the daily struggles of the contemporary Christian.

Following are remembrances from several of the scores of friends that Rich collected through the years. These appreciations originally appeared in [Christian Research Report](#).

Mike Blanton
Co-President
Blanton-Harrell Entertainment

My honor and joy in the Rich Mullins story was that I signed him to his first publishing deal as well as his first artist deal.

Around the time that we were starting Reunion Records, I was standing at a carnival-type amusement park and a girl came up to me and said, "You need to listen to this guy named Rich Mullins." I said, "Fine, whatever," so she gave me a tape. I went and listened to the tape and about fell over about the song, "Sing Your Praise To The Lord." I played it for Amy and she went crazy over it, and Brown [Bannister], of course, went crazy over the song, too.

The process of recording that song on Amy's album opened up the opportunity for me to talk to Rich and as I did, I just fell in love with him. I decided that no matter what happened, we needed to sign him to a publishing deal, which ultimately led to the recording contract. And to this day, I don't know that we've had a more gifted or important songwriter.

Rich's passing is very bittersweet. I've never known anybody who so firmly had one leg

already in heaven and one leg still on this earth. I don't think he ever felt fully comfortable or settled-in here, and he lived the type of life of somebody who was not settling in. I know he feels much more at home now than he ever did over here.

Jon Rivers
VP/Programming
KLTY-FM/Dallas

Early in Rich's career, I was at post-Dove Award banquet. It was the usual fancy banquet with all sorts of food and everybody was all dressed up. All of the servers were in white dress coats and white caps, and chefs were running to and fro to make sure everything was all right. I was walking down the dessert line and as I got up to this one dessert, I noticed that standing behind the counter serving was Rich Mullins, who had relieved one of the workers, and donned the cap and jacket. And he stood there the rest of the night serving people dessert, although I'm not sure that half the people knew who he was. That made a big statement to me that nothing mattered to him except the Gospel.

Bob Thornton
Program Director
KTLI-FM/Wichita

Rich used to come into the station quite a bit. He had friends who worked here and all of us knew him, so he would drop in when he was in town. He would just walk in the lobby and call out to any staff that was around, "Who wants to go to lunch? I haven't got any money!" That was Rich. He never had any money...

As I got to know him over the years, it was because he literally gave everything away. He really didn't have anything. I've spoken with the lady who was house-sitting his Navajo reservation home. She went over on Sunday [after the accident], and she said "There's nothing here." Rich just didn't collect things. A few musical instruments, a jacket...

So, Rich was just really about giving himself 100% of the time and even when it came down to something simple like, "I haven't got any money for lunch," it was probably because he had given everything he had to somebody that had needed it the day before.

Michelle Fink
VP/Marketing and Sales
Reunion Records

I remember when Rich had gone back to Friends University to finish his degree. I called him one afternoon and he was a frantic mess - really stressed about a final test in a band class that he had to do well on to pass. He was so nervous about it. It was so ironic. He'd played in front of thousands of people, had already put out six or seven records, and was skilled on numerous instruments, and here he was having to be judged by this institution. But it was important to him because he needed the degree so he could teach music on the reservation. Of course, he passed and got his degree so he could teach. It was so Rich. It was never about him or for him, but so he could reach out, teach, and minister to others.

Billy Crockett
Artist Songwriter
Former Member, Ragamuffin Band

In the studio Rich would say to me, "Don't make this too pretty." He didn't want to be sentimental. 'Hello Old Friends' says it outright: "Let love be stronger than the feelings."

He was always laughing about how out-of-tune his instruments were. He played a beat-up buzzing guitar until one day somebody came to the airport and handed him a new Guild which he received like an amazed little boy.

Life seemed trivial and dear, like some kind of holy joke. I suppose that it's no real surprise that his life ended abruptly. He did seem to live like a meteorite! The "reckless raging fury" of God's love is what he was onto! I simply hoped for more chapters, more chances, more strange improvisational occasions to play for and glimpse the wild heart of a true believer.

Terry Hemmings
Former President
Reunion Records

In 1993 Rich and I were in Ireland working on a video. We had a very, very long day shooting and went to a pub for a late dinner that night. At the pub there was a local Irish family band playing old, old, Irish instruments, with names you can't pronounce, so Rich and Beaker decided that they wanted to join in. They went out to the car, got their instruments, came back in, and started playing - just figuring it out as they went. It was the most incredible two hours of music I've ever experienced, just because of what it was - it was raw, it was spontaneous. We were kind of on a high, and by the time we got back to the hotel it was two in the morning. It was really late, but Rich knocked on my door - he

was still going. That night had been one of the most incredible experiences for him, just to play with those people.

As we were talking the phone rang and it was my wife. She told me that my grandmother had died and that I needed to come home. I hung up the phone and Rich could tell that something was wrong. And I looked at him and said, "My grandmother just died." And he said, "Good for her" and he got up and left.

We were really fortunate to have Rich. He had a different perspective on everything - life, pain, sorrow, joy, trauma, sin.... You name the topic and he had a perspective that we'd never heard before. And that we'll never hear again.

Jim Chaffee
VP/General Manager
Myrrh Records

I was with Rich two weeks ago in Window Rock at the Navajo Nation. We had spent two days working on the songs for the new record, then took a day to hike in the canyon. We came home late that day and the missionaries who lived in the compound invited him over for dinner. We were very tired, but he felt that he should go because this was his only opportunity to see them and he hadn't been home for six months. He had dinner with them, then came back in late. We were thinking he had come back to go to bed, but he grabbed his guitar and said, "I'll be back in a bit." He went back to them and sat in their living room until very, very late that night and sang through the whole new record to this missionary couple and their kids because they were his friends and he wanted to share the new music with them. That was the heart of Rich Mullins.

"But I look back over the events of my life and see the hands that carried Moses to his grave lifting me out of mine. In remembering, I go back to these places where God met me and I meet Him again, and I lay my head on His breast, and He shows me the land beyond Jordan and I suck into my lungs the fragrance of His breath, the power of His presence."

~Rich Mullins, 1/31/92

Transcribed by Sandy McMullen

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CCM Update Article

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/ccm-update-sep2997.html

Christian Music Industry Remembers Rich Mullins

His untimely death impacts friends, industry, fans, and Christian music

Mark Smeby

CCM Update

September 29, 1997

"God used the music of Rich Mullins - from the No. 1 hits to the most obscure album cuts - to reach beyond denominations, age and race."

That observation from KFTA-FM's Jeff Roberts in Beaumont, Texas, echoes the hundreds of sentiments heard nationwide as Christian music learned of its loss-what Steven Michael, music director for WFTN-FM in Elkhart, Kan., called the "most tragic loss in the Christian music industry in 15 years."

For listeners in areas with Christian radio, the news of Rich Mullins' death on Friday night, Sept. 19, quickly found its way onto the airwaves and quick-acting stations with Web sites. By Monday, stations had opened up lines to allow listeners to tell about the impact Mullins' music had on their lives.

KJIL-FM in Meade, Kan., took song requests all week, letting listeners introduce the song and share its personal significance. "We've also been encouraging listeners to send Email and share these notes on the air," said KJIL's Michael Luskey. "The response has been good and healing."

Mullins, 41, and band member Mitch McVicker, 24 (vocalist on *Heaven Is Waiting* from the independent release, *Canticle of the Plains*), were coming from Elgin, Ill., where they had been recording McVicker's debut album. The two were traveling southbound in Mullins' Jeep on I-39 near Peoria, Ill., to a benefit concert in Wichita, Kan., when, according to Illinois Highway Patrol Sgt. Gregory Jacobsen "the Jeep lost control for no apparent reason, causing it to roll and eject the two men." A semi tractor-trailer driven by Gregory V. Lea of Newkirk, N.M., also traveling southbound, approached the accident shortly after it happened and swerved to avoid the Jeep in the middle of the lanes. "The rig then struck Mullins, who died instantly," Jacobsen said. It is not known who was driving or what caused the Jeep to fishtail. "Indications are that the two were not wearing seatbelts," Jacobsen said. The police report cited no witnesses. Jacobsen, a reconstructionist, will continue investigating the accident.

McVicker was taken to a nearby hospital, then airlifted to OSF Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria, Illinois. At press time, McVicker's condition had been upgraded from "critical" to "serious" but he was still in the neuro-care unit, said hospital spokesperson Chris Lofgren.

McVicker's family has been inundated with people wanting to extend help, said Chuck Pryor at WCIC-FM in Peoria. "This is a real opportunity for us to really be a Christian radio station," Pryor said. "The community has rallied around them, cooking meals, doing their laundry, prayer."

WCIC was by far not the only radio station who attempted to provide healing through its airwaves. Bob Thornton with KTLI in Wichita, Kan., quickly became the point man, updating stations nationwide through mass Emails and daily Website postings. Radio stations and their listeners around the country were clearly impacted by Mullins' life and death, and time was spent remembering:

Mullins had recently signed to Myrrh Records [The CCM Update, Aug. 25]. He was scheduled to go into the studio in October with producer Rick Elias to deliver an album slated for June 1998. A video and book was also anticipated, said Mullins' current manager, Jim Dunning, Jr., who has served as Mullins' CPA since 1989. Mullins had already written and, singing into a jambox, had crudely recorded the new songs on tape. "A lot of us believe this record needs to be made," Dunning told The CCM Update. "It's a powerful album, so we're still considering a way to release it in a manner pleasing to Rich."

"When we were together two weeks ago," said Myrrh Vice President Jim Chaffee, "Rich told me he had 10 songs about Jesus that really expressed his heart. When we've had an opportunity to work through the grieving process, Jim [Dunning] and I will begin to discuss the appropriate way to move ahead with these songs."

Mullins had also began his book, according to longtime friend Kathy Sprinkle of Wichita, Kan., who told The CCM Update about a recent conversation she and he had: "He read me the first reflection for his book and I just sat there. Sometimes he scared me with the things he wrote because I knew they didn't come from him. That's how I felt when I heard this. I told him, 'It's the best thing you've ever written.' He agreed." For Mullins, that was a strong statement, considering his 100-plus songs and the page of prose he wrote each day.

The future of the Mullins-produced album from his and longtime companion Beaker's musical, *Canticle of the Plains*, is uncertain, said Dunning. The musical, based on the life of Saint Francis of Assisi, takes place in the Midwest during the 19th century. The time

frame ties the story in with the Navajo Indian Nation in Window Rock, Ariz., where he and Mitch McVicker had been living. Mullins moved to the reservation in 1995 and had been teaching music on the reservation, though not in the schools, for the last two years.

For the past nine years, Mullins had devoted his time to Compassion International and within the last three, began focusing strictly on the U.S.A. ministry, specifically with Native American work in the Southwest. "His desire was to teach students on the reservation," said Alyssa Loukota, U.S.A. ministry marketing and communications director for Compassion. "Due to a lack of funds, many schools on the reservation did not have a music program. That's what Rich hoped to offer them."

Rich Mullins' life and music affected lives unlike any other artist, people note. "For me, Rich was more than just another Christian recording artist," an Email said. Thousands more have followed suit, said Brian William, whose Rich Mullins Website bears more than 1,500 tributes from Mullins appreciators. Additionally, CCM Online has collected more than 200 Emails from 35 states and five foreign countries. For Christian music, many say, one of the greatest influences is gone. Michael W. Smith is among the artists who cite his impact.

"Rich Mullins' life and music has impacted me more than anyone I know. He had the ability to take the mundane and make it majestic. Nobody on this planet wrote songs like he did and I feel we've lost one of the only true poets in our industry. I love Rich Mullins. And no one will ever know how much I'll miss him."

The funeral for Mullins was held Thursday, Sept. 25 at an undisclosed place for family only. The open visitation was at Whitewater Christian Church outside of Richmond, Ind., where he was born. At press time, a memorial service was scheduled in Nashville with Michael W. Smith, Mullins' Ragamuffin band and others participating. A nationwide memorial service in Wichita, Kan., coordinated by KTLI-FM, was to be held Saturday, Sept. 26, in Wichita State University's Henry Levitt Arena. Mullins' family has asked for donations to Compassion International in lieu of cards and flowers. Contact (800) 334-KIDS, P.O. Box 7000, Colorado Springs, CO 80933.

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October 22, 1996

Those cruising the Christian Fellowship chat room on America Online are often treated to inspired philosophical discussions: Great theologians like Aquinas and Merton. Election-year politics. Singer/songwriter Rich Mullins.

No, really. Mullins is the kind of artist whose music roots around in the mire of head and heart: His lyrics prompt deep contemplation, his melodies and arrangements evoke far away places and long ago times. They beg for commentary and discourse.

What inspires such artistry is a fearless approach to living. "Like Thoreau, I love to suck the marrow out of the bones of life," the Indiana native says. "People want to know God's will for them. In one of His most explicit statements on the subject, Christ said, 'Come, that you might have life and have it abundantly.' Christianity is about living out the will of God and living abundantly," Mullins explains.

Abundant life for Mullins has included a much-touted move to the Southwest to teach music at a Native American school. It has also meant an ambitious European concert tour and the release of Songs, a greatest-hits package that is a veritable ledger sheet of more than a decade's songcrafting. The collection also includes one new recording, "We Are Not as Strong as We Think We are."

"It's a breakup song," he says of the composition. "I don't know anyone who hasn't gone through the experience of a friendship or romance that ended on a sour note. This song tries to look at that honestly."

No sour notes for Mullins: During the GMA convention in April, he was feted by such peers as Amy Grant, who had a hit with his "Sing Your Praise to the Lord." But Mullins insists on brushing aside such music-industry

glitter aside.

"I try not to let my career become the central element of my identity. If you go through life just worrying about how to make more money or become a bigger deal on the radio, you end up living pretty close to the surface," he reflects.

For one who has chosen to balance a recording career with a job teaching the Navajo, there should be little risk of that.

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Reed Arvin

Over the last decade, Reed Arvin has been privileged (his own admission) to be both friend and producer to Rich Mullins. He was there when the first tentative chords and vocals were laid down on vinyl (it was ten years ago, remember), and in 1996, he's still the man at the helm for Mullin's latest, Songs, an aptly titled retrospective of some of Christian music's most popular songs as penned and performed by everyone's favorite ragamuffin.

Arvin has also sat in the producer's chair for artists 4Him and Bruce Carroll and has been composer of some snappy little ditties for television commercials. His talent even extends into the written word, as evidenced in his popular first novel, The Wind in the Wheat, the story of a Christian artist's climb to and a struggle with stardom. His novel's hero, who many surmise was based on Mr. Mullins himself, is in reality, the embodiment of Reed's experiences working within the Christian music industry. As for Rich, his story is probably most easily found in the songs he writes, as Reed Arvin has discovered each and every time he's worked by his side.

There's a Bible story that reminds me of Rich Mullins. Maybe you remember it: early in the book of Acts, Peter and his buddies are preaching within earshot of the Sadducees. Peter, not known for his tact, is stepping on toes, both social and political. He's calling spades spades, and the spades don't like it. In fact, they want it stopped. So the Sadducees call Peter and his pals into a big meeting, and give them a funny kind of order: "Look," they say, "you can believe whatever you want, but would you just shut up about it?"

This, my friends, is a sentence often uttered to Rich Mullins. Not by Sadducees, or course - by record company reps and even by producers, like me. "Do you have to talk politics in your concerts?" "What, may I ask, do oil companies have to do with the gospel?" "We all know televangelists are mainly crooks, but did you have to name names?" In other words:

"Rich, you can believe whatever you want, but would you just shut up about it?"

Shutting up, thank God (and I mean that quite literally) is not what Rich Mullins is very good at. I've always believed his gift is only part music; the other part is pure prophecy, and it's a gift that lies uneasily on its recipient. Prophets aren't necessarily the best party guests. But if Rich Mullins were better adjusted and better behaved, a lot of art would not exist in this world, and a lot of truth would still be unspoken. A lot of the songs that you and I have been ministered to by would still be thin air. Of course, with all those toes getting stepped on, it also must be said a lot of hurt feelings would never have needed repairing. Maybe even a few enemies would have remained unmade. But prophets occupy the space between the risk and the payoff and that's where Rich Mullins lives.

To tell or not to tell? What would you do? Suppose you had this crazy gift, this prophetic vision that compelled you go be the one to point the finger, to tell the tales. Would you want it? Or would you shirk it, preferring to be liked by all rather than sincerely admired by a few?

At least in Rich Mullins' case, he gets to tell his tales with a song, and that dulls the blade even while it sharpens the truth. There's comfort in the poetry - a place to hide in the beauty of language. After all, he's pointing the knife at himself most of the time, anyway. If we get cut, it's from shrapnel, not blades, Rich Mullins of the exploding songs....

Songs are where Rich's greatest gift resides, even though he is a powerful communicator in other ways. It's in the songs that whatever message God has chosen to flow through Rich greets the world. And after eight albums, it was high time to put together a compilation - a collection of work that represents the best of some very fine, highly explosive writing.

But putting together a collection meant making tough decisions. How could we pick which ones to include with so many options? Only 12 could make the grade, with three new songs added to put punctuation on a long musical sentence. Here's how record companies normally make that choice: they make a list of all the radio hits; they take the ones that charted the highest and they're done thinking about it. But when they made a list of Rich's singles that charted in the top five, there were 20 of them, so that didn't help. Choices had to be made.

Maybe your list would've been different. But how could you leave any of the ones that are on the project off? Could you do without "Creed?" Could you abandon "Awesome God?" Forget "Sometimes by Step?" Or "Hold Me Jesus?" See what I mean? In the end, all the songs on the disc remained because there was no way to cut them. They mean too much. And you could, perhaps, make another complete disc with different songs that mean as much to you. But CDs only hold so much music.

Recording new songs on a Best of is always a little tricky. After all, you've already put together your finest work, and anything you add to it needs to be at least as good; you hope, of course, that it will be even better. It's a chance and a challenge to show what you've learned. And there's the record company, too - they want more radio hits. But radio singles are usually picked from a disc-full of new material. With only three new songs added on Rich's project, there wasn't much margin for error.

As usual, Rich wanted to do something different. Two of the tracks on Songs aren't really new at all: "Elijah" from his debut album, is a song that many people feel is Rich's finest ever. But when we did it the first time, we were a couple of bums trying to figure out which end of the microphone to plug in. "So let's record it again," Rich said, "but bring it up to date a bit." Agreed. One down, two to go.

"Sing Your Praise to the Lord" was the first song Rich ever had professionally recorded, if you can imagine that. The song of the decade. The song that sky-rocketed Any Grant's career. A cornerstone of Christian music. And that, of course, was why we argued over it. I didn't want to record it. What can you add to a classic? But Rich revealed a secret: there was a long middle section that had never been heard before that Amy's camp had neglected to include Rich wanted it unveiled. So a new, acoustic guitar driven version of possibly the most famous song in contemporary Christian music made the disc. Two down, one left.

"We Are Not As Strong As We Think We Are" is a different kind of song for Rich; it's an unabashed love song. Different, yet the same; the same passion and fragile humanness are there, exposing more, perhaps, than the composer would have wished. If you ever wondered what kind of song Rich Mullins would write you after you broke up with him, this song is the answer.

And so the tradition continues - what most of us shut up about, Rich

speaks. It gets him in a lot of trouble, but it gets him a lot of adulation, too. And caught in that tension he keeps on, taking his place in a treasured line of artists who speak the unspeakable.

So the disc, Songs, is a history of writing and singing and arguing and winning and losing. What does it all mean? The songs will mean something a little different to each one of you. What it meant to me to be on the other side of the glass as Rich told his tales doesn't fit in a sentence or two - not after eight records.

There is space on the liner notes of every album for the producer to write his personal thanks. I didn't say much this time because I didn't know what to say after so long. So I'll say it now: Rich, thank you for sharing too much. You turned your wounds into art, and I'm grateful. You'll find your peace when art has a name. Until then, may you quill never run dry.

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Where Mercy Leads

 kidbrothers.net/articles/sepoct95art.html

Phil Newman

When everything that could be shaken was shaken, Rich Mullins ended up straddling the New Mexico border, quotin' Deuteronomy to the Navajos.

Folks who've heard even a sampling of Rich Mullins' music know he likes to sing about places - from the tall trees down at Johnson's Creek, to the winter wheat of Ireland, to the moonlight spilling them cold Dakota hills.

Rich's affinity for describing his surroundings in song springs from numerous travels and an ability to let his senses lead him to the next poignant lyric. Come to think of it, he says, spending time at "home" - which was Wichita, Kansas, until a few months ago, when he loaded up the truck and moved to New Mexico - feels like being on vacation.

"Wichita was more like a home," he admits, "but I think that's because I was in college, and you never assume that you're gonna live in the same town that you go to college in. Someone told me, 'You seem to have this real sense of detachment.' It's just that I don't get the opportunity to get very attached. But I'm really affected by wherever I'm at."

One summer Sunday, we caught up with Rich in a place that definitely has affected him, a place he doesn't get to visit as much as he once did: Bethel Methodist Church, a weathered clapboard structure not far from Johnson's Creek and just down the road from the house Rich still owns in Bellsburg, Tennessee, 30 miles outside Nashville.

The sanctuary holds almost sacred significance for Rich. Over the years, the author of 'Sing Your Praise To The Lord' and 'Awesome God' has walked to the church alone to craft songs at its piano or to rest in its rickety wooden pews and silently reflect on life.

On this particular afternoon, however, the old worship house and its yard were filled with the voices of friends gathered to celebrate tow beginnings:

the birth a year earlier of Aidan Strasser, the son of Rich's longtime friend and co-writer, Beaker; and the hatching of a new chapter in Rich's own life. After years of dreaming and planning, he had earned his music-education degree from Friends University in May and had relocated to a tiny town on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico where he plans to teach music to Native American children.

Among the revelers assembled in Bellsburg that day were three members of Rich's Ragamuffin band - Phil Madeira, Lee Lundgren, and Mark Roberston - and one of Rich's newer pals, Mark Lowry, who cracked everyone up without saying a word simply by puttering up on his road-hoggin', bad-boy motorscooter.

Another purpose of the party was to toast the upcoming release of Rich's latest album, Brother's Keeper, the Indiana-bred crooner's first "self-produced" effort. (He got help from 'muffins Jimmy A., Rick Elias, Aaron Smith, Madeira, and Lundgren.) Rich and band, along with fellow Reunion artists Ashley Cleveland and Carolyn Arends, will hit the road this fall for a 65-stop tour.

As the sun began to set, a few party-goers got misty-eyed talking about their friend Rich moving even farther away from his old Nashville stomping grounds. Rich, on the other hand, seemed largely unaffected, chowing gleefully on barbecue and birthday cake and engaging in a spirited theological discussion with Mr. Lowry. (They eventually called a truce and went for a spin together on the Markmobile.)

"Every time I go back to my old house in Bellsburg, I really wish I could go there for a week," Rich did acknowledge later, "because there are so many people I'd just like to sit down with and say 'hi' to.

"At the same time, I think I am a little peculiar in that I never miss people until a week before I'm going to see them. Friends will say they're coming out to visit, and I'll say, 'Cool.' As the time approaches, I get anxious to see them, and when they finally get there I'm excited."

His east-of-the-Mississippi friends will have to work at it a bit more, but you can bet they'll find ways to visit Rich in his new locale. The motivation for his move, he says, was a desire to extend the love of Christ to a culture outside mainstream America. "Growing up as a kid I had a real romantic fascination with Indians," he says, "but for me the thing is, here's a culture

that is right here. It would be much harder for me at this time to move to Asia. So I can have that kind of experience without having to leave the United States."

Native Americans have been "largely overlooked by the church," he contends. "Although there have been a lot of mission efforts on the reservation, I think the concern was more to civilize them than to Christianize them. The idea was to get them to live in square house and wear ties and conform to a cultural bias rather than a revealed truth."

In his new role, Rich considers himself to be joining God's established work. "I generally think that anyone who thinks they're doing something for God is probably delusional," he says with characteristic candor. "If I want to do God a favor, I should just live as fully as I can, and allow Him to enjoy the gift that He's given me."

There's another, more personal reason for Rich's move. It also explains why he decided to return to college in his mid-30s. And it's one of the reasons he chose to self-produce Brother's Keeper rather than collaborate with his longtime producer, Reed Arvin.

Rich says he is begging God to stretch him beyond his boundaries, be they musical, spiritual, or cultural. "You come back to saying, 'What is essential Christianity? What does faithfulness to Christ really involve? When does it require me to set aside my biases, and when does it require me to stand by them?'"

As Rich recalls, he began laying the groundwork for his move to the Navajo reservation when he recorded Winds of Heaven ... Stuff of Earth back in 1988, which was about the time he started hungering to share God's love with other cultures. He admits that the future of his recording career is undetermined. "We've done six albums since I really started wanting to get involved in mission work. And music has given me the opportunity to prepare myself to do that. I was able to go back to school, which a lot of people my age wouldn't have been able to do."

Still, lest anyone fret that Rich might stop waxing poetic about all the pictures he sees in the sky and on the earth, the creative juices continue to flow in his new southwestern home. "I've already been inspired," he says thoughtfully. "It's a very inspiring place."

Even if the cactuses don't grow as tall as the trees down at Johnson's Creek.

Rich's Mullings

Hide his opinions under a bushel? No! The Richmeister has given us lots of quotable quips over the years, from the personal ("Being single's great, except between about 10 and 2 every night") to the political ("Clinton's no more a clown than anyone else who's ever been in there") to the ponderable ("We are the temple of God; it's about people, not buildings"). Here he goes again:

On his 65-stop fall tour with Ashley Cleveland and Carolyn Arends :

"I'm excited about the tour for maybe three reasons. One, I love the music on the album, and of course we'll be doing a lot of that music. Two, I have a blast with the Ragamuffins. Three, you write these songs because of people, and when you get to play then live, you get to have contact with people, the big motivation behind why you're doing what you're doing."

On why he still sings about God's mercy so much: "I just think I believe it more deeply now than ever before. I have days when I go, 'I'm lucky to be alive.'"

On his spartan lifestyle (he's currently living in a trailer): "My experiences with things have always been disappointing. Nothing has ever been worth what it cost. It doesn't mean I never buy anything, it just means I recognize at the outset that this is a bad investment." He grins. "I do like my jeep an awful lot."

On the Ragamuffins: "I wanted to be part of a band. Growing up I was excluded so much, 'cause I was never an athlete, so I think sometimes I overcompensate now. It's fun to be an accepted part of a team that's making a contribution."

On living single in a sex-obsessed society: "I think the big reason why a lot of people become sexually active is because they think they're gonna get something besides just sex out of it. And the reality is all you do get is just sex. And you think, 'Oh, this will make someone really love me ... if I

remain pure I might lose my boyfriend or my girlfriend." Well the deal is, you might lose them anyway. When you compromise your faith, when you disobey what is clearly lined up for us in terms of values, you have compromised who you are."

On his disillusionment with politics: "You cannot change people by changing their laws. Like Plato said, 'Let me make their music and I don't care who makes their laws.' Music is more powerful than legislation."

On his secret desire to perform at the White House: "I've sometimes thought, 'Am I such an egomaniac that I would actually go there and play for on of these guys?'" And I'm sure I would. But I also think that it would be really wrong. But of all the wrong things I've done I'm not sure it would be any worse than any of the others."

On the human tendency to debate everything: "I don't know how to have an opinion without being passionately about it, even if it's just an opinion I assume for the sake of argument. I find that the people I don't really care that much about I argue with, and the people I really love, I pray for. So I think if I would pray more and argue less, I would have done better."

On the difference between Generation X's and his own Baby Boomer generation's attitudes towards pop culture: "Rather than trying to get their identity entirely from a pop movement, X'ers enjoy it, exploit it, they get out of it exactly what they pay for, and then they leave it alone. I think when I was kid, we really believed that pop culture was going to have some kind of enduring legacy. And it does: We've got AIDS now."

On his healthy appetite: "After two hours of dead silence in the jeep, (Rich's pal) Mitch looks over and goes, 'Do you think you could eat a 72-ounce steak in an hour?' I go, 'Sure, I could eat a 72-ounce steak in about 20 minutes.'"

He's not kidding - we've seen Rich eat. - P.N.

This One's a Keeper, Brother

Over lunch at Mulligan's in downtown Nashville, Rich ruminates on his latest project, song by song.

"Brother's Keeper"

When he and Beaker wrote it, Rich was staying with author James Bryan Smith and Smith's wife, Megan. Jim was working on a book called Embracing the Love of God," Rich recalls, "and so a lot of our conversations were about how you allow yourself to experience God's love and how you love someone the same way." As for one of the song's most thoughtful lyrics - "I won't despise him for his weakness, I won't regard him for his strength" - Rich reflects: "It's easy to accept that we shouldn't be dismissive of people because of their faults, but it's harder to not be inclusive of people because they're attractive. What's wrong with regarding someone's strength? The strength is not the issue, the person is the issue."

"Let Mercy Lead"

That cooing at the beginning is indeed Aidan, Beaker's son, to whom the song is addressed. (The tyke turned 1 in June.) As Rich tells it, "we were sitting around and we said, 'Hey, let's write a song for Aidan.' We started it before he was even born. And Beaker said, 'I want to write a song for him that will take him through life.' I wish we could have the same intensity about everything we write, because we spent months and months discarding really cool ideas. Beaker is not entirely satisfied with the song. But fortunately he's gonna be around to tell Aidan other things."

"Hatching of a Heart"

"The motivation was just that I had this real dreamy piano riff ... I stole the title from Thomas Morton ... It's like this book I'm reading now, Soul Making, by Alan Jones. One of things I've become interested in is: What is a soul? Does it grow, does it pre-exist us? The Bible doesn't really talk a whole lot about it. It's the whole 'born again' thing. My own experience is there in the song."

"Promenade"

The song tells of a policeman who intends to quiet a group of revelers, but who encounters so much joy that he ends up joining the celebration. "We try to make Christianity attractive," says Rich. "And that's like saying I'm going to make the Rockies attractive. How are you going to do that? By letting them be what they are. I think nothing is more compelling than to see people who have the Spirit living in the Spirit, and not trying to advertise, just being what they are."

"Wounds of Love"

"I think everyone who allows themselves to honestly be loved is going to be wounded," muses Rich. "Your life is a gift, and out of gratitude to God you should go out there and live. And when it's all over you're gonna be pretty wounded. And I hope that you're hurt because people have loved you, not because they used you."

"Damascus Road"

Rich sings that he was "hung in the ropes of success" until God "stripped away the mask of life they had placed upon the face of death." Why that image? "That's one of the miracles of Christ - the blind can see," he says. "There are times in your life that I believe God powerfully gives you vision, and you say, 'Oh my gosh, that is not what I thought. I fact, that is the exact opposite of what I thought.'"

"Eli's Song"

The album's second baby-inspired song was co-written by Rich, fellow Ragamuffin Lee Lundgren, and Lundgren's wife Nikki, for the couples newborn daughter, Eliza. "I had written this dulcimer thing that I really liked," Rich recalls. "Nikki had said the dulcimer melody sounded kind of rough and kind of delicate, like a cowgirl and a ballerina at the same time. We put that together with a leaf to make it a three-part image." The added the rocking of Eliza's cradle to fade out the tune.

"Cry the Name"

Oops. The hard-boiled, artery-clogging Scottish eggs had just arrived, and we got so caught up that I forgot to ask Rich about this song. It's great, though. Listen for yourself. But first, pass the pepper.

"The Breaks"

One of this song's lines - "I do not know yet what I am made of, or all I may someday be" - mirrors a lyric from "Creed" on Rich's last album: "I did not make it, no it is making me." Rich attributes both thoughts to one of his favorite authors, G.K. Chesterton. "It's kind of like the apostle Paul's thing about losing your life to find it," says Rich. "Growing up in the 60's and 70's, people said 'I'm going out to find myself.' And its (chuckle) sort of silly. My parents would say, 'How did they lose themselves?' ... And so in the

process of living, and trying to be faithful to Christ but not doctrinally narrow, I'm asking that if I were to hold on to Christ, what would that be, and what would that not be? And in light of that, let me let go, oh God, in your mercy, of everything that is not you."

"Quotin' Deuteronomy to the Devil"

This folk-rockish tune came to be as Rich and Beaker were "just sitting around one day" in Rich's Wichita pad. "It was sort of a joke, actually," says Rich. "as much as I am sometimes skeptical about those preachers that yell at you all the time - like in real life, if a preacher yells at me I just leave - if you cartoon it, then I think it's interesting."

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Melanie Friebe

*The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone...'
- Genesis 2:18*

*He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor
from the Lord. - Proverbs 18:22*

Yada. Yada. Yada. No, this is not CCM's attempt to make fun of God's word or even the whole concept of marriage. No, we're not even succumbing to an annual Valentine's Day single-life depression. What we are doing is wondering if the more than 70% of our readers who are single wish they weren't? Well, if you can't wait to walk the aisle or even if you opt to remain a 'Bachelor-'til-the-Rapture,' here's a few words of truth, wit and wisdom from five musical friends on what they think of living single. Thanks to Rich Mullins, Cindy Morgan, Brian Barrett, Pam Thum and East to West's Neal Coomer for letting us get so personal.

Learning to be Content

A common denominator that ran through the course of conversations and thus became the foundation for these discussions was the issue of contentment. "A lot of people think they are struggling with being content and single, and I think that everybody struggles with being content," says Rich. "You can blame your discontent on being single, or you can blame it on anything else. I don't think that necessarily singleness is any more the

cause of discontent than marriage is."

Cindy agrees and adds there's a lot more to being content than simply finding a mate. "The problem is not that we don't have dates, but that we don't have peace in our lives - that [our] relationship with the Lord isn't the number one thing."

As Rich points out, "If you're miserable single, you'll be miserable married. If you're miserable married, you'll likely be miserable divorced. The idea is not to change your status, the idea is to stop worrying about how miserable you are and do something fun - like try to love somebody."

"The thing to do is not get tied up with 'what is my future going to be,'" claims Brian, "but live one day at a time, knowing that God has you exactly where He wants you to be. We have to be content where we are, knowing that God's taking care of us. That's probably what we face the most as believers - we have to truly recognize that God has us here for a reason, and that He is in control."

Pam offers her insight when she shares where she's at in her own life. "I'm learning I have to be who God wants me to be and be real tender and don't let the walls come up. Concentrate on being the best you can be and be ready for whoever comes along your way."

Add to that the fact that Neal says he's never really worried about being single, and so far this forum contains like-minded thinkers. And their consensus on singleness seems to be, you can either beat your head against a wall about it, or accept it and enjoy life, day by day as God gives it. After all, marriage doesn't solve everything.

Rich explains, "I think one of the problems I have with married people and single people on the issue of singleness is people often talk about marriage as if it's a cure for loneliness."

More than not, one of the main purposes of marriage is for companionship. The alternative is being alone. But does that then leave those who are alone, lonely? Not entirely so, Rich continues. "One of the things that I find shocking is when I talk to my married friends, who are very married - they are very happily married, and they're also very lonely. And in the midst of that loneliness they have to deal with somebody else and their loneliness."

Putting God First

As we've learned since day one in Sunday School, there's a vacuum that exists deep inside each person that is made for one person and one person only - and that's not necessarily a mate.

Cindy says, "The whole thing about feeling like the [spouse] is going to make the picture complete...not to use [the Apostle Paul] as the ultimate example but that's who we all go back to when we think about singleness - but Paul...felt like he was fulfilled. And I'm not saying that I think everyone should be single. No, if you want to be single you'll know it. I want women and men, and I'm talking to you and I'm talking to myself too, to feel like their life has a purpose without a mate. And that purpose is fulfilled in Christ and not in one another. A half and a half will never make a whole."

As Pam mentioned earlier, concentrate on being the best you can be and "look inside and say 'Lord I want to be better,' but not look inside and say 'it's all me.' We need to say 'Lord take my personality, and if there's anything I need to work on, reveal it to me. Help me to grow better.'" There is a place, as Pam says, where confidence grows, where security is found in relationships, and those relationships are ready to become more serious.

"Relationships are hard work," admits Brian. "The older I get, the more I realize it's gonna take that. To be honest I've avoided a lot of serious relationships because I know what's involved in it, and I knew there was no way I could do that at that point. And so I have intentionally stayed out of that on purpose because I knew there was no way I could do that given the time that I have."

And as Rich said earlier, the focus needs to come off marital or non-marital status and be put squarely onto the pursuit of honest and deep relationships.

"I think people have their priorities," cites Cindy. "I think that people do what they want to do. And I think the proof is in the pudding and the fruit is in the tree - if you spend 13 hours a day working then 'where you put your heart is, there your treasure will be.' A lot of professional women I know that are single don't make any time for personal life."

And as Neal assesses, those prioritized relationships aren't always simply love interests. "I was never one to try and find that one person to fill a void,"

says Neal. "Friendships are important to me. I've always tried to surround myself with as many friends as possible. I've always had the assurance in the fact that I was gonna enjoy my friendships, but I would always depend on God to place that person in my life when the time was right."

And that brings this discussion back to the original issue of contentment along life's journey whether traveling it alone or accompanied by a mate - the question remains can human nature find peace along the road? Singles want the stability and security of being married, married folks wish for those carefree days when they had no responsibility. Yet as this forum has discovered, life and love are wonderfully complicated issues that are learned as you go.

"Loving isn't [necessarily] about filling a void," Rich says. "Loving is being open to somebody, being receiving of them, allowing what's going to happen to happen."

What's a Good Date?

Pam Thum:

"I don't think the first date should be getting all dressed up. I think like going having a picnic or sitting outside by nature. Or going somewhere where you can have fun and really get to know each other. I think in the winter it would be fun to go somewhere like ice skating or a cute restaurant where you can see the snow. Or where friends are around. On the fun side 'cause then you can get to know someone - they're not so stiff."

Cindy Morgan:

"I went on a date once [that] was so fun. You know what we did? We went to the Wal-Mart deli. I got to watch 'em grill my bread. We sat there at Wal-Mart listening to the announcements going on. There was a guy named Mike that was having a birthday that day - we saw him, we wished him a happy birthday. Dinner at the Wal-Mart."

Brian Barrett:

"A good date is something that's fairly innocent. I went on a date the other night...it was me and a friend of mine, and two friends of his. Kinda like a double date. We just had fun cooking them dinner. We tried a recipe that he got off the T.V., and it worked - it worked out well. We pulled it off, and they made dessert. Then we got them a Christmas tree, and we played

some games. That was fun because you're in three or four different environments, and you realize how people think and act around other people."

Rich Mullins:

"A nice place would be the Sangra De Christi Mountains [in northern New Mexico, southern Colorado]. Go swimming, make dinner, then we would have a campfire."

Neal Coomer:

"A good date for the '90's would be something that's just a little bit out of the ordinary - a play or a musical. Something that you just really feel like you're doing something special. That and then going to a coffeehouse afterwards."

Singles and S-E-X

Single life in the '90's doesn't just entail the struggles of loneliness and contentment...baby that's just the tip of the iceberg. Modern society is very sensual and sexually oriented, and although the sexual revolution may have tapered off, the issue of sex outside marriage remains a 'do-I-or-don't-I' question. This year the True Love Waits campaign witnessed over 200,000 pledge cards planted in front of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., pledge cards which represented a commitment to abstain from sex until marriage. But in this society, that promise can be difficult to maintain.

According to Song of Solomon, sex is supposed to be a fulfilling thing - wouldn't being so intimate with another human being achieve that wholeness so many singles seek? From our forum, Neal responds, "I heard a pastor describe sex, for a single person, as being more of an issue of rejection. You're being used by that other person, and you're more than likely using that person. Once that experience is over, and they have their needs met..." So what started out as something intended to fulfill, ends up creating more rejection and more emptiness.

But the raging hormones and sexual struggles remain, and how can the average single cope? Rich Mullins releases that tension with a surprising solution. He runs. "In general or from women?" we ask. "Both," he replies. "We live in a society that constantly pumps us with sensuality and then we also live in a culture where our lives are so sedentary. I think a lot of time

what we really want more than to kiss someone real hard is to get a good sweat up. So I think exercising really does do something for us that we need done because otherwise sex becomes less appealing."

Another valid point Rich made dealing with the bombardment of Hollywood's influential babe-watch is the other side of the coin. Modesty. "Modesty says a lot for a person. And I really find, ironically, modesty is more attractive than immodesty."

"Are we buying into this?" asks Pam. "We buy into it like [when] we go to a movie and there's all sorts of nudity. 'Well, the story line was really good, they took Jesus' name in vain 15 times, but the story line was really good.' You know, I don't think we're as strong as we think we are. We're human, and when our hormones are raging anyway...man, that's all I need. All that really does is flame that fire. Are we buying into [more than] we can handle?"

"I think there comes a point," says Brian, "where everyone kind of says 'I'm either gonna pay attention to these feelings and give in to them or pay attention to them, knowing that they're valid, but they shouldn't be acted on right now.' There's a right and wrong that's implanted in believers, for sure. We've gotten to where our scales of measurements have been on the world's standards and not God's. Look at the word of God. Ask God what He's telling us about a mate, what they should be like and how they should act. Look to those characteristics."

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Excuse Me, But Aren't You Rich Mullins?

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/clfeb94.html

Jim Long

When you're thousands of miles from home, and you don't think anybody is watching, do you really have to behave yourself?

He's not as famous as say, David Letterman, Hillary Clinton, Michael Jordan, or Rush Limbaugh. But to a considerable number of people, he is recognizable, this Rich Mullins guy. Even so, when you're several time zones and thousands of miles away from home (as he was), you'd think you could fade into the crowd and, if you felt inclined to, reinvent your morals for a while.

The thought did cross his mind.

"I was in Amsterdam, and there was so much sin all around us," Rich begins, with characteristic candor. "After years of behaving myself as best as I could, I was really having to hang on for dear life. I was thinking, no one would know. I could do anything I wanted to do. Wouldn't it be fun just to cut loose for a couple nights and misbehave as much as I want?"

"Fortunately, because I travel with my friend (and fellow band member) Beaker, and because he's not afraid to hold me accountable, I did not do anything. But I sure felt the temptation to toss out my morals for an evening.

"A few days later, we were in Germany, sitting in a train station, assuming that everyone around us was German and did not speak English. We were having this totally candid conversation on a bench in the train station. I was talking very openly about some of those temptations. All of a sudden, this guy leans over and says, 'Excuse me, but aren't you Rich Mullins?'"

"I went back over the conversation to see if I was going to admit to it or not.

But I thought, this is good. A lot of times when we look at people we admire spiritually, we think they have arrived at this place where they cease to be tempted. The reality is, our faith may grow stronger over time, but the temptations never go away. It is hard for me to imagine that I will still feel tempted at 60, but when I was 20 I couldn't imagine I would feel such strong temptation as I do at almost 40."

That experience led Rich to write the song "Hold Me Jesus," from his current album, A Liturgy, A Legacy and a Ragamuffin Band (Reunion):

*Hold me Jesus 'cause I'm shaking like a leaf
You have been King of my glory
Won't you be my Prince of peace?*

"It's about nearly crashing and finally realizing that even when I lose patience with myself, God is still there. Whatever steps I have taken forward, I have not taken them alone. I have not taken them without a lot of help from a very patient Father who is, in fact, a whole lot more patient with me than I am with myself."

The image from the album title of a ragamuffin band is appropriate. Check your dictionary. A ragamuffin is "a shabbily clothed, dirty child." Perhaps you've felt that way yourself. (Rich borrows the phrase from the Brennan Manning book, The Ragamuffin Gospel.) We may pretend to be polished and sophisticated. In truth, we're just a bunch of ragamuffins.

For this album, Rich wanted to create something that would not just be slick studio production. He'd let it have a few rough edges. So he put together a bit of a ragamuffin band. Talented musicians, sure, but players he would set free to craft a more spontaneous album.

But now, what is a liturgy?

And what is a legacy?

Rich explains:

"Liturgy gives faith its bones. Legacy gives faith its flesh. Together they make us who we are. Liturgy is something we submit ourselves to, so it can shape us - reciting psalms, singing hymns, saying prayers. Legacy

gives us our perspective. It's those things handed down from the past that helps make us who we are."

The liturgy part of the album is a call to worship, featuring songs of praise (such as 52:10 - as in the book of Isaiah, chapter 52, verse 10), songs of faith (Creed), songs of communion (Peace), songs of confession (like the one inspired by his Amsterdam experience, Hold Me, Jesus).

*"If I were a painter, I do not know which I'd paint
The calling of the ancient stars
Or the assembly of the saints"*

The legacy part of the album calls us to reflect on our heritage, those things that have contributed so much to making us who we are: "Land of My Sojourn," "How to Grow Up Big and Strong," and "You Gotta Get Up."

And Rich reflects on his own legacy.

"A few generations back, there were twin brothers who were orphans in France. As young teenagers, eager to find a better life, they stowed away on a ship bound for America. One of them was my great-great grandfather. I remember the first time I flew into New York and saw the Statue of Liberty (a gift from France, as were those twin brothers). I thought of those twins, my relatives, both of them 15 or 16 years old, standing there on Ellis Island. They had come to begin a new life; they didn't even know the language. And I wondered what it felt like to them, years later, age 80 with grandchildren, knowing that the dream of a better life had come true.

"I remember too the first time I ever saw the Lincoln Memorial. I probably spent three or four hours sitting on the steps before I even went in to read the speeches. I'm not particularly patriotic, but that experience was just overwhelming. I don't know that the United States is 'God's Country,' but the church has been so strong here, and because of its influence, we hold life to be sacred and we believe that individuals have dignity. This is part of our legacy.

"I thought of this when I stood before the Lincoln Memorial, and when I saw the Statue of Liberty for the first time. Imagine the millions of people who have fled to America because of those very ideals. Somewhere back in my

ancestry, from several different directions, people came to a country that was totally new. If any of them had not done that, I never would have happened. At least, I would not be who I have become."

*"Their prayers are still whispered
And I'll sing their song
In the land of my sojourn"*

A legacy: Our past plays its part in what we become.

A liturgy: Our faith can shape us, in spite of our struggles, or the powers of temptation.

A ragamuffin band: Our rough edges are temporary.

"Excuse me, but aren't you royalty?"

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Beaker

If you've ever owned a Rich Mullins album or been to one of his concerts, you've undoubtedly already been introduced to Beaker. For the past five years the two "Kid Brother's of St. Frank" (as they call their merry band) have been roommates, songwriting partners, traveling comrades, fellow-students, and friends.

Who better than to talk about the rich new collection of songs and stories that make up Mr. Mullins' latest tour de force known as A Liturgy, a Legacy, and a Ragamuffin Band - and give a little insight into the mind that put the words and music together

"So, what's he like? No, I mean what's he really like?"

You wouldn't believe how many times I've been asked this question. And what are my options for possible responses? How do you answer a question like that? It's like trying to tell someone what a sunset looks like out in the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas. Or describing the way an affectionate dog's tongue feels when you find it unexpectedly on your face. Or it would be like answering someone if they asked you to describe a painting by Monet. There are so many ways that people are the same and yet the ways that they are unique are as numerous as the constellations. And I'm not quite sure which it is that makes a person a person - the similarities or the differences.

Rich Mullins is my friend - this much I can tell you. A large part of me wants to leave it at that. To be able to say to you that he is my friend and **that** is what he is really like. No more, no less. I could let you fill in all the blanks. Because, don't we all, in some sense, see people more as we want to see them than as they really are? I love it when C.S. Lewis says:

"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors." (The Weight of Glory)

So, does that tell you anything of what I think Rich is really like? Do you see that even after living with him for the last five years he seems to me just like Cheryl, who is our travel agent, or Richard, who delivers the mail, or Israel, a little boy who lives in the Philippines, or this guy named Brian who is in my American Studies class? Can you see that I believe none of us are "mere mortals" and that it is quite possible that every human being is a miracle - no more and no less amazing than the person we think the least of or the person we think nothing of at all?

How's that for an introduction to Rich? There's always hope that I'll get with it before my space runs out and dive into the real Rich Mullins. I guess I could tell you a few things, but you must remember that I am biased, opinionated, and limit in my perspective. It will be magnanimously difficult to maintain any kind of objectivity and you must promise to keep that and all of what I write in some sort of perspective.

With that out of the way, let me tell you couple of secrets. Are you ready? Rich loses things. It's not a big secret to those around him, but you might not have known it. He loses stuff all the time. Sometimes it drives him crazy. Sometimes it drives everyone else crazy; especially when it's the last set of keys to the car that's supposed to take us to a concert that is two hours away and starts in forty-five minutes. But most of the time, we all laugh. Rich loses something and then we laugh. He laughs and we laugh. It's such a bizarre reaction, but I've figured out why. It is because each has discovered that he doesn't have to take himself too seriously. It would be pretty easy for him to believe that the world, his world, revolves around him. It would not take much for him to think that he knows everything. I can tell you, since we have spent the last five years working, traveling and writing together, he does know just about everything - with a few critical exceptions - on being, the location of the ever important and ever disappearing car keys. Since I've got you going, how about another secret?

We never know when it's going to hit him. You can't predict it. You can't see it. You can't really feel it, but once it strikes, you have no doubt that it's there. So, do you want to know what IT is? I ought not to tell you - but I am not much different than most people I know - I struggle so much with doing what I ought to do and with not doing what I should. Oh well, I've started into it, I might as well tell you now. The secret is that Rich gets obsessed. You're never quite sure what he is going to get obsessed with, but once he is there is almost no going back. It could be an obsession with a movie (we saw Dances With Wolves thirteen times in its first three weeks in the theater). It could be with drawing plans for a cabin (he's been working on some since I've know him). Or it could be with trying to finish a song. I guess he's not alone. We have an ongoing abuse of one another over who gets obsessed more. Sometimes it just hits you: like you go through days and days without thinking about your fingernails - then, with no warning, you realize they need to be

trimmed. Suddenly everything revolves around trying to find clippers - it feels like life will not be right until the obsession is eased. Now, you might think that nail clipping or movie going or architectural designs are merely trivialities. That Rich, or I should be obsessed, you may think, is dangerous - almost sinful. I think that we sometimes fail to see the strength and the weaknesses of things. If I had called it "having an incredible capacity for perseverance," or even "having a desire to never give up or quit" maybe it would not have sounded as revolting. There are dangers - the object of our obsession may be unhealthy, hurtful or even unholy. But the flip-side is just as good as the bad is bad. There can be a determination to love, and obsessions with living in peace, and an intense desire to live in grace.

Well, that's about all there is to that secret - you want another? Nope, I can't do it. You'll have to take what I gave you ... but, if you'd like to know what Rich has been working on, then keep on reading.

Sometime in October when the leaves demand you attention and the air smells crisp, when the excitement of a new school year has turned to drudgery and wool sweaters are pulled from moth protected trunks to replace tank-tops, Reunion Records will release [A Liturgy, A Legacy and A Ragamuffin Band](#). You should buy it (sorry, I told you I was biased). Anyway, the idea of Rich's newest project was to gather a bunch of friends together, lock them in a studio and create an album about life, and God and worship. He wanted to come up with a recording that was a collaboration of the talents, the musical and personal quirks, the insights, and the feelings of the whole group; this group became the Ragamuffin Band. The idea grew into reality somewhere near Anderson, Indiana, sometime around March 1993. People from Kansas, people from Texas and people from Tennessee spent a couple of weeks putting together an album that represents fairly well who Rich Mullins really is. In fact, this article wanes in comparison. But come to think of it, it would probably be far better for you to find out from [A Liturgy, A Legacy and a Ragamuffin Band](#), maybe even from this article, who God is and what He's like, rather than gaining insight into the life and personality of some Christian musician. And, you know what? Rich would prefer it that way. **That's** what he's really like.

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Mulling Over Life with Rich Mullins

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/rejoice.html

Kim Hurley Benson

It's another humid day in Kansas, and Rich Mullins sits on a tier halfway up from the stage at Roxy's, a Christian club in Wichita, talking about his new life away from the stage.

Whether playing the keyboards or guitar or hammering away on a lap dulcimer, he's created countless songs of praise that compel audiences to stand and sing.

*Just back from a three month European tour to promote *The World As Best As I Remember It, Vol. II*, he appears refreshed and invigorated.*

Earlier last summer, a tired, much older looking Rich premiered the new Vol. II album at Roxy's, introducing and playing cuts with his co-musician "Beaker."

But there's something different about Mullins that makes one wonder what happened during the summer.

Maybe he's merely glad to wrap up the tour, to come home and be an everyday Joe, but it's probably his decision to take a sabbatical and complete a degree in music education that makes him seem so animated.

If Mullins the musician was intense, a little eccentric, and hard to pin down ("people want to know what inspired us to write certain songs...they're probably more provoked than inspired," he quipped the night of the Vol. II premiere), then the collegian Mullins is markedly different. His attitude is softer, and he's sincerely concerned about putting something good in other people's lives.

At first glance, he draws a double take. Gone are the long dark locks often tied in a ponytail ("I left my hair somewhere in Holland," he sings with a hint of longing sarcasm), and on this day he abandons his worn-through-

jeans/no-shoes look for a t-shirt, running shoes, and a pair of shorts.

He realizes that bowing off the stage means he won't be able to buy everything he wants.

Consequently, "I may not be the snappiest dresser on campus, but at 36, being a snappy dresser is a lot different than it is when you're 19."

He also knows the advantages of being an older student.

"When I ran out of money in high school, that meant the party stopped. When you're 18 and on your own and run out of money, suddenly your lights get turned off. You find there are more serious consequences. I'm used to being worried about the electricity being off!," he laughs. "It's happened, I survived it, and the world didn't end."

Mullins has been a student for seven years. When asked if he's on the extended plan, he corrects with a slight smile, "It's the extended unplanned plan!"

Tongue-in-cheek humor from Mullins is to be expected, but his class schedule this semester is somewhat surprising. He's filled it with seventeen hours of music theory and performance classes: conducting, percussion methods, and cello, to name a few.

The ultimate in self-punishment?

"I can't think of anything more fun."

The hard part about coming off tour means he has to switch tracks and do weird things like wake up in the same room each morning and make his own bed.

"I do like clean sheets, and I do like my bed made, so every morning I have to go through the conflict of, 'Gee, do I want my bed made badly enough to make it? Do I want clean sheets badly enough to change them?'"

He's been on the road so long that traveling doesn't bother him anymore.

"I would say we've been gone now for about two or three years, and it's always hard when you come back to the place you live, and it doesn't feel like home. Not because it's not home, but because you've forgotten what home feels like. You forget what it's like to be able to visit with the same

people day after day, to know exactly where the laundromat is, so that if you only have an hour to do your laundry, you can do it." He paused "Laundry seems to be a big issue here..."

The home he's returned to is a modest two-bedroom rental house that sits in a quiet middle-class neighborhood of Wichita. The neighborhood reminds him of his boyhood home, though it's far from an Indiana farm. But he's very comfortable here. Why doesn't he trade up for a bigger place?

"I live a very ordinary life because I'm a very ordinary guy. A lot of musicians give themselves a lot of slack because they've been told over and over how exceptional musicians are. I think people are people. An exceptional plumber is as exceptional as an exceptional musician. I don't buy the idea that musicians are a unique breed of people who need to be pampered. I tell them, 'You know what? I get to make a living doing what I love to do. Isn't that favor enough?'"

Mullins seems hesitant to talk about his success. It's not that he takes it for granted, but he believes his life as a musician can be overshadowed.

"I think there's much more power in living a brilliant life, in letting every moment be brilliant, than in all the songs I ever wrote, or all of us wrote together. One truly Spirit-filled life will impact the world more than the entire Christian media combined.

"If the impact of my life at best is gonna be similar to the impact of the lives of other Spirit-filled people who have lived in the vitality of that Spirit, why would I waste a large amount of energy and create a lot of tension around a career that will be less successful than my life? The problem is, in my life now, my career is much better than my life. I've talked to people about commitment, about being a good neighbor, and I've seen other people practice it. I just want to see if I can do it."

Somewhere between here and Europe, Mullins decided to come out of his comfort zone, to let people in. "I had this sharp realization that, 'Wow! This was the first time I sat down and had a conversation with a non-Christian for a long time, that I really have become real picky about doctrinal issues that I don't think are real essential issues. And when that happens, that indicates to me that my focus is way off. And whereas I may be doctrinally correct, I am not focused where I ought to be."

He thought about what he wanted his life to be like for the next two or three years, the kind of person he wanted to be.

"I want to be a loyal customer. I want to trade at the same grocery store. I want to get to know people by name. I want to go there a couple of times a week when I go and buy my potatoes and Corn Chex, and say, 'Hey, Sally!' to the girl at the check-out stand, and 'How's school going, Billy?' I want to give them some self-esteem."

As a kid, Mullins was exposed to people who drove by him as he toiled away. They refused to look at him, he says, because hard work was somehow beneath their dignity. He recalls a four-year stint as a cashier in a parking garage.

"There were people who went out that never looked at me. They'd hold their money out the window and never slow down on their way out. They were regular people.

Later on, other people told me, 'Man, we used to hang out and wait until the rush was over so we could come out and talk to you, because we loved to sit and talk.'" All this made him realize there's no such thing as someone who's just a cashier, that everyone and everyone's job is important.

"If I can communicate that to the people in the grocery store, the mechanic, my neighbors, the people in my church, the students at my school, then that's the kind of person I want to be."

For Mullins, ministering to people doesn't end just because he's put his guitar in the case. While he thinks performing is a great opportunity to minister, he also believes simple things like going to a restaurant or even planting a garden give the same opportunity.

"Beaker planted a garden a couple of springs ago, and we never got to eat anything out of it. The nuns next door came over and ate our tomatoes. Different people from the community took them and ate them. And I think, 'What a terrific thing!'"

The really exciting times, he says, are when the concert's over, "and you've gone into the lounge at the hotel, and you're sitting there having a Coke, and you end up talking to the bartender, and he tells you how he was in Bible college, and how he got from Bible college to bartending school, and

he opens up to you about the confusion he really feels about his faith, about the guilt he has. He really opens up and shares with you, and then during some point he says, 'Man, I have no idea why I just told you all of this.'

"And you're able to say, 'Well, I know why. Because you needed to tell someone. Because in a sense, if you take the Bible seriously, I'm a priest, and I came in here to take your confession, to tell you the blood of Christ still washes away the sins of the world; that there is no sin committed too great that cannot be forgiven, and to encourage you, that the Lord hasn't given up on you yet.'"

Although Mullins takes his church membership seriously, he admits to not attending regularly since many concert dates have fallen on the weekend.

Pursuing a career in music education would mean leaving the Midwest, and his church as well. "I think that when you join a church, you pretty much throw your stuff in with theirs, and it's kind of like, 'I'm here for the duration.' I hope that the church will continue to be supportive of me when I leave and that my commitment will not be something they thought lightly of. Very honestly, I'm not as committed as I should be, and very honestly, that's part of the reason I came off the road. Because, man, it's easy to talk about accountability when you're on the road. But it's impossible to have, unless you're making the kind of bucks where you can take your elders with you or something. Staying home is where the rubber meets the road for me."

Success has come quietly but steadily to Mullins since Amy Grant recorded his *Sing Your Praise to the Lord*, earning a nomination as song of the year in 1983.

Since then, he's produced a string of top-charted singles for Reunion Records. His long list of nominations for Dove Awards (*Awesome God* has been nominated three times since 1989) without ever winning is perplexing.

Born in Richmond, Indiana, between two older sisters and two younger brothers, he counts himself blessed to have Christian parents. The solitude of growing up on a farm perhaps stirred in Mullins a desire to look beyond the obvious, to appreciate things usually taken for granted, and use his imagination to amuse himself.

"I spent many afternoons and evenings all alone, back in the field. There were times I was terribly lonely, but I think isolation is good for kids. One reason I have an imagination that is still pretty active is because I was really dependent on my imagination. I didn't have MTV. We didn't watch much television. I think one reason I became a writer is because I spent so much time on a tractor, and I would make up songs and rhymes and dirty limericks and anything else to entertain myself while I was working.

It made me a very bad farmer, but that was possibly the beginnings of what a lot of people say is a pretty creative streak."

The first job his father gave him was counting calves. This, he points out, was a brilliant teaching technique.

Not only did he learn to count, he learned to distinguish heifers from steers. It was the start of a very wholesome appreciation for sexuality.

"Wow! Talk about getting the facts straight! By the time you're ten on a farm, you've seen every animal breeding in every kind of position imaginable. You're pretty much aware."

When the work was done, there was time to learn the rules of fair play.

"You couldn't be really picky about who your friends were, and so you learned how to have arguments, how to fight and then have the winner ride you home on his bicycle, that if we didn't work a friendship out, we'd just be without friendship, and that at times it's better to be by yourself than to have to endure someone else's hang-ups."

He thinks that being involved with natural things might also take away some naive notions about prayer.

"I think it's possibly easier for people who plant to pray because when you plant, you realize you're not gonna harvest until the right season. Sometimes people view prayer like it's a slot machine; if you put in the right amount of money, cry the right amount of tears, believe with the right intensity, then God will automatically - in the next five minutes - turn the world around to suit you."

Mullins has thought long and hard to find the right words to describe his best friend, Beaker.

"One of the things that is most attractive about Beaker is also the scariest to a lot of people: he places a very high premium on honesty. And I respect that very much. It does make him into a bit of a skeptic. On the other hand, he's not gonna dish out a lot of stuff he doesn't believe. He's not gonna tell you what you want to hear, unless you want to hear the truth.

"He's kind of quiet. He's a lot more off to himself than I am. He wouldn't talk only because he had an interview, but only if he had something to say. So he has a very different approach to things than I do. And I definitely respect his approach and love him because of his values and because of the integrity I see in him. That's a rare thing to find.

"Beaker's even more accidentally a musician than I am. He really has no interest at all in being a musician, of becoming a great rock star or a contemporary Christian star. He's planning on being an English teacher. He does like to play the guitar, and to me, that makes him more interesting to talk to and to work with. He enjoys trying new things. He's not afraid of challenges. In these ways, he's one of the funniest people I've been around."

The only thing not fun about Beaker, Mullins says, is his harrowing pursuit of truth (as he begins to explain, an impish grin creeps across his face, and it's as if he's about to burst out in laughter), "because I can sometimes be real full of bull. And he's got a detector on him that doesn't let me get away with it. So I can go into a Sunday school class and fool every kid in there that I am this great spiritual giant, and then I get back in the truck and Beaker goes, 'Wow! Good job!'"

There are still a few things Mullins wants you to know about himself: that he shouldn't be taken too seriously; that magazine articles about himself sometimes make him look too perfect, like Superman; that there are times when he wishes he were married, and a lot of times he's glad he isn't; and that he admires the Irish for their love of poetry and song, and their adamant stand against change, but any amount of Irish in him is probably pretty negligible.

If you come to Kansas and pull up beside an old pickup at a stoplight, and there's a couple of big dogs in the back and two ornery guys up front, it just may be Mullins and Beaker. If it is, you can smile, knowing they're more than just two ordinary guys with ordinary lives.

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Rich Mullins: Humble Poet, Reluctant Artist



kidbrothers.net/articles/calendar.html

Michael Nolan

"I'm a quirky guy and so my audience is probably quirky people," offers Rich Mullins with a mischievous wrinkle of his brow.

A humble poet and reluctant artist, he finds it baffling that he has become successful while others he believes are more talented haven't fared as well. While his name may top the popularity polls, Rich has carved his niche as an eclectic musician appealing to listeners who like to think as they sing along.

Yes, he is the "Awesome God" guy but his forthcoming album on Reunion, The World as Best as I Remember It, Vol. II, proves once again that Rich's music defies pigeon-holing. His sixth album, it is yet another pilgrimage into the quirky and profound.

A conversation with Rich roams freely, exposing both the untainted wonder of a child and the wisdom of a man willing to wrestle with the complexities of this world. Rich hopes that, in his songs, you hear his life as well as something of your own.

"I kinda believe that if something hits me, there's a chance that it will hit everyone else," he says. "When I read a book, it's not good because I learn something new, it's good because it articulates something I've always known, I've always suspected but was never able to speak."

"C. S. Lewis talks about how we don't really want to see beauty," continues Rich. "We want to participate in it. He says joy hurts kind of like an ache, that there's a sense of longing in every kind of joy. The closer I get to something, the more I realize how far I am. It's like falling in love - I am more miserable and lonely for it."

"Robert Frost said, 'A great poem is an immortal wound.' You don't have to understand it. You may not have any idea what it's really about but you

read it and you never get over it. You may even hate it. A great poem is something that you don't recover from so that's why it's really hard for me to say, 'That's a great song' because I've recovered from most songs I've heard."

His forte is presenting a new slant on basic truths, infusing everyday observations on life with compelling insights. "I have a reputation for being more honest because there's probably no sin I've ever struggled with that everyone else hasn't struggled with," he says, "And, according to the Holy Scriptures, there's no sin I've struggled with that Christ wasn't faced with. So why should I be embarrassed if Jesus had to deal with this and he was the Son of God?"

In his search for the common threads of life, he often turns to familiar Bible stories. "A lot of times we look at people in the Bible and we think they're so different than us. But when we look at the things that we all share in common, we find it's very profound."

If The World as Best as I Remember It, Vol. I is the historical world as Rich remembers it, Vol. II is an expansive view of the contemporary world, exploring the human predicament and the need for timeless truth in a trend-driven culture.

Not surprisingly, music is important to Rich but message is paramount. As he surveys the music industry, he says, "It's shocking to me the kind of energy and talent and money that goes into making a song and how insignificant the song is. It's all about getting product out but I think there's considerable less thought about 'what are we really going to say with this once we get people to listen?'"

Because his music is uncompromisingly message-driven, producer Reed Arvin finds working with Rich a phenomenal opportunity. "He is completely released from any commercial considerations in the making of the record," Reed observes. "That gives us the opportunity to roll all the dice on every song. Like he'll say, 'I want people to be real nervous when they hear this.' That's a totally uncommercial attitude. The only thing that matters is that we try to make them feel what he wanted them to feel in the lyric.

"We could make it so that no one was bugged by anything we did musically, lyrically, or any other way," Reed adds, "but that's not worth trading off the possibility of making a person cry or see themselves in

relation to God in a new light."

Without question, Rich is willing to "bug" people. He says, "A lot of people come to Christian concerts because they think they're going to hear the same old boring droll about 'If you tithe, you'll get rich' and 'if you do everything right, your wife will always love you and your kids will always do good and you'll never get multiple sclerosis' which I find to be purely heretical. (But there are) a lot of people who really want to hear something else, who really want to hear what the Gospel really teaches. I think that there is a real hunger.

"The first time I heard Brennan Manning speak I wept because I realized that I'd been going to church since I was a week old and it had been years since I'd heard the Gospel spoken. When we dig down beneath the issues, this is what we find - that God loves us. To me, there is nothing more riveting.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom and we were created to fear God," Rich observes. "It's not a fear like a fear of the dark. It's more like a fear of the Grand Canyon or the way you're afraid of standing on the top of Mount Washington when the wind is blowing.

"I think about our relationship to God is like a child's to his father. I didn't live in perpetual fear of my dad. There are times that the child is playful around his father. I think it's good that Christians can be playful around God. I like what C. S. Lewis said, 'We must play but our play must be with people who at the outset take each other seriously.' That is, in fact, the best kind of play."

Reed thinks Rich's playful nature is perhaps his most understated quality. As evidence, he offers a song on the new album with the unlikely title of "Maker of Noses" and another in which Rich describes his relationship with co-writer/comrade Beaker as 'Wally and the Beav, David and Jonathan.' Not a lot of people would write about themselves that way," observes Reed.

Although he's had six #1 songs and 'Awesome God' was #3 song of the '80's in Christian Research Report, Rich pays little attention to such notoriety. "G. K. Chesterton says if you want your world to be big, you must make yourself small in it." Not only does that keep humility intact, it allows the freedom to be amazed at the world.

By listening to Rich's songs you might not realize that, as a teenager, he was a self-confessed cynic who "hardly had any fun." The kid who found something wrong with everything has clearly changed his tune.

"There's a line out of G. K. Chesterton where he says how we hate monotony because we're not strong enough to exult in it. He says children kick their legs rythmically out of an excess, not a lack of life. How do we know that all daisies are alike not because they have to be but because God never gets tired of making them? How do we know the sun doesn't rise every morning because God says, 'Do it again'? It might be due to the abundance of God's life that the universe continues without variance. Then he says, we have sinned and grown old and our Father is younger than we."

For Rich, the wisdom of years remain as he pursues Christ's command to become like a child, reveling in wonder and taking the time to consider what is so often taken for granted. It is there where both the quirky and profound reside and a poet finds a place to participate in beauty.

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Thoughts and Reflections

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The World As Best As I Remember It

Rich Mullins

Rich rememberances...

I am thinking now of old Moses: sitting on a mountain - sitting with God - looking across the Jordan into the Promised land. I am thinking of the lump in his throat, that weary ache in his heart, that nearly nitter longing sweetened by the company of God...

And then God - the great eternal God - takes Moses', thin - worn, thread-bare little body into His hands - hands into whose breath marked off the heavens - and with these enormous and enormously gentle hands, God folds Moses' pale lifeless arms across his chest for burial.

I don't know if God wept at Moses' funeral. I don't know if He cried when he killed the first of His creatures, to take it's skins to clothe this man's earliest ancestors. I don't know who will bury me.

...Of God, on whose breast old Moses' lays his head like John the beloved would lay his on the Christ's. And God sits there quietly with Moses - for Moses - and lets his little man cry out his last moments of life.

But I look back over the moments of my life and see the hands that carried Moses to his grave lifting me out of mine. In remembering, I go back to these places where God met me and I met Him again and I lay my head on His breast, and He shows me the land beyond the Jordan and I suck into my lungs the fragrance of His breath, the power of His presence.

Rich Mullins, 1-31-92.

Rich rememberances...

Psycho-babble is that language spoken by sailors who have become so interested in navigating their way around their boat that they have forgotten to read the stars and sea. They may be able to get from the galley to the head but will be lost in their journey from point to port.

Jesus, being God, is the perfect picture of who God is. Jesus, being man, is the picture of perfect humanity.

To find him - to meditate on him - is to find God and our own true selves. It is to see the brilliant design of the boat and it's course and the beauty of the sea.

Rich rememberances...

God did not give Joseph any special information about how to get from being the son of a nomad in Palestine to being Pharoah's right hand man in Egypt. What He did give Joseph was eleven jealous brothers, the attention of a very loose and vengeful woman, the ability to do the service of interpreting dreams and managing other people's affairs and the grace to do that faithfully wherever he was.

Rich rememberances...

A faith that moves mountains is a faith that expands horizons, it does not bring us into a smaller world full of easy answers, but into a larger one where there is room for wonder.

Rich rememberances...

(The world as best as I can remember it)

The Bible is not a book for the faint of heart - it is a book full of all the greed and glory and violence and tenderness and sex and betrayal that benefits mankind. It is not the collection of pretty little anecdotes mouthed by pious little church mice - it does not so much nibble at our shoe leathers as it cuts to the heart and splits the marrow from the bone. It does not give us answers fitted to our small-minded questions, but truth that goes beyond what we even know to ask.

Rich rememberances...

I do not work myself into some ecstatic frenzy to meet God. God does not

Speak to me through opium dreams or out of hypnotic trances. He meets me in history and takes me beyond it to Himself. Any "mysticism" that is authentic does not abrogate time and space - it infuses those elements with meaning.

Time and space - that is the world. And this is the world as best as I can remember it.

Rich remembrances...

Look at us all - we are all of us lost and in all of our different ways of pretending, we all fool ourselves into the very same hell.

Look at the cross - we are all of us loved and one God meets us all at the point of our common need and brings to all of us - all who will let Him - salvation.

Rich remembrances...

Is that "great cloud of witnesses" watching my walk so as to judge or is it informing my way so that I may walk it? Do they hide the lights so that I cannot see it or do they filter it so that its blaze will not blind me? Can a man see God face to face and live? Can I not see an eclipse better through a pinhole in a paper than without it?

We can't so much see light as we can see things because of it. So, I do not meet God in a vacuum - I meet Him in the world He has provided for me to meet Him in - in a world of events and of places, of history (time and space), in a world of lives of people and their records of their encounters. I meet God in this world - in the world of these things...

...and this is the world as best as I can remember it.

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Remember to Forget Yourself

Rich Mullins

*Christianity isn't about being **self-sacrificing** - it's about being **self-forgetting**. Forget yourself once in a while, and open your eyes. Focus on this big, beautiful world God has made. If you walk to school, learn to identify every plant that you pass on the way. At night, learn to identify every constellation in the sky. Get to know birds by their feathers, flight patterns and songs.*

It's a big world - and it reflects the character of God.

People who become self-centered lose contact with the outside world. They spend all their time and energy worrying about bad grades, or unfriendly friends, or mean parents. Forget about those things once in a while, and allow yourself to become involved in the lives of people who have equally bad situations. Open up and let other people matter to you.

When we take a bigger view of things, God will give us more grace and love for others. We'll find ourselves responding to the needs and to the goodness; we'll find ourselves angered by injustice to others.

And we'll have a bigger appreciation of even small things, like the smell of a wet dog on a mucky day. Let go of yourself - and God will show you a whole new world.

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*Thanks go to Eric Townsend and his webpage,
Rich Mullins: Never Picture Perfect, for sharing this article with COYN.*

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Never Picture Perfect

Elizabeth Leighton Jones

Rich Mullins is enigmatic, at the very least. He projects a boyish warmth that disarms a philosopher's incisive heart. He seems almost childlike and yet his songs and his humor flash with insight and wisdom. It has been remarked that in many ways he is a poet of our times. Truly he is more... poet, philosopher, minstrel, man... and less. Never picture perfect, but somehow better because of that.

He would have it that life is far more charming with all its unexpected foibles, flaws, and mars. "God's idea of holiness and perfection is probably way different than ours," elaborates Rich. "So I'm trying to go through the Scriptures and say, 'ok, Lord, what is holiness from Your perspective? And more and more I'm convinced that it's just love. I have a firm belief that life ain't perfect, and it's better because it ain't!"

Those thoughts wrought the conception and subsequent birth of Rich's fourth release on Reunion Records, Never Picture Perfect, which follows Rich Mullins (1986), Pictures in the Sky (1987) and Winds of Heaven... Stuff of Earth (1988).

Since his 1986 debut, Rich has garnered four #1 radio hits: "Verge Of a Miracle," "Awesome God," "If I Stand," and most recently, "My One Thing." (The praise song "Awesome God" quickly found its way into the heart of church worship and is a contender for Song Of The Year at the Gospel Music Association's annual Dove Awards.

But part of Rich Mullin's charm lies in the whimsical attitude about his musical successes. "Some of the best things in the world are not really important," he told Young Salvationist in January 1989, "My real ministry is not music. My real ministry is the way I treat the lady on the corner, the way

I treat the mailman."

Quickly professes Rich, "To be honest, I didn't want to do music (as a career). It just happened." Certainly music is an integral chunk of Rich Mullins. Chuckles Rich, "I've been writing since I was four... of course, a lot of that stuff was pretty bad! But I probably write songs that are worse now... because I'm doing it more!" A few of those songs have turned out "okay," including "Oh Come All Ye Faithful" (recorded by Debby Boone), and three recorded by Amy Grant: "Doubly Good," "Love Of Another Kind," and "Sing Your Praise To the Lord." But that's not the beginning, that's the middle of the story.

The beginning came after his tenure as an undergraduate at Cincinnati Bible College, when Rich finally began to stretch his wings musically. Working with Zion Ministries, he began writing and performing with their band at retreats and churches around the country. In 1981, the band recorded an album, all of which were Rich Mullin's compositions.

Providentially the tape was placed in the hand of Mike Blanton, who was looking for a final song to round out Amy Grant's Age to Age album. Mullin's "Sing Your Praise to the Lord" was precisely what he was looking for. The song was signed, and so was Rich, to Blanton/Harrell Inc.

Rich moved quickly from writing to performing, signing a recording contract with Reunion Records in 1984. The year 1986 saw Rich opening throughout "Unguarded" tour which segued quickly into a national band tour of his own in 1987. During that year, Rich was also part of a mission trip that went to Guatemala. Then the fall of 1989 saw Rich completing a 62-city "Winds of Heaven... Stuff of Earth" tour. And lately, the winds of heaven have been blowing in a different direction.

Rich's trip to Guatemala and subsequent trips to Japan, Hong Kong, Korea and Thailand - where he sweated side by side with fellow believers to replace their former opium cash crops with fruit trees - is merely the tip of an iceberg that exposes ulterior motives for his life. Muses Rich, "I try to look at God and say, "where are there needs?" I believe that God will use people who will put themselves in a place where they can be used. God can use me where I'm at right now. But I also think that God likes people on the move. I think that's why He took Abraham, who was somewhat settled, and turned him into a nomad. He wants us to be ready to grow and be changed.

For the longest time I've had a real hope that I could help someone that others would pass over. So I'm preparing myself to go somewhere and do something that I think will be a great honor and adventure."

Preparing for the adventure has led Rich into college again, with the goal of obtaining a B.S. degree in music ethnomusicology (Music Ed) and then eventually his master's degree. Ironically enough, his goal will lead him further away from the music industry. Quite likely, to the other side of the world, which suits Rich just fine. Rich laughs, "My big ambition is to get out of this business!" By the time he's 40, Rich hopes to be teaching on an Indian reservation or full-time on the mission field in a third-world country.

Meanwhile, school's in session for this 34-year old song crafter who has helped changed the face of contemporary praise music. He is smack in the middle of a 16-hour course load, although he is finding time to play fourth chair french horn (out of four chairs) in the college band. Humbly remarks Rich, "They don't know what they're in for! They're going to be so sorry! When I play it tends to sound like a flock of geese... there is absolutely no one worse than me!"

French horn is only one of over nine instruments that Rich Plays, including piano, guitar and hammer and lap dulcimer.

Rich has cloaked himself in gentle humor, able to laugh, refusing to take himself too seriously. For example when asked if he considers himself a singer, Rich grins, "I have a really funny speaking voice, and when I sing it's not a whole lot better! But I don't think people mind. If people come to my concerts, it's not because they expect to go away having been musically dazzled. They come to my concerts because people find it a great relief that someone would have the nerve to get up and do that in front of other people. And that encourages them to do the same thing!"

School won't be the only activity on the agenda. This year's summer break will incorporate a 45-city tour which will start in mid-May and last through August in support of Never Picture Perfect.

In many ways the central theme of Never Picture Perfect is embedded in Rich's song "First Family."

"And now they've raised five children

*One winter they lost a son
But the pain didn't leave them crippled
And the scars have made them strong
Never picture perfect
Just a plain man and his wife
Who somehow knew the value
Of hard work good love and real life."*

Explains Rich, "My parents made Mistakes and my parents weren't perfect... which was the really cool thing about my parents! You see, none of us is perfect. But God chooses to put great treasures into clay jars."

And all the songs bear the Rich Mullins stamp, incisive and thought-provoking... yet somehow never callous or cynical, always slightly wondering and in awe of our Creator. And God does choose to put His greatest treasures in jars Of clay. In this case, rich, brown-red Indiana clay.

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Awed By God

Chicago O'Hare Airport: "Now announcing, United flight 756 to Nashville is cancelled due to hazardous tornado conditions." Singer/songwriter Rich Mullins, bleary-eyed and a bit frumpled after a long stint of concerts, steps off a flight from Grand Rapids. In four hours he'll attend a party held in his honor by his Nashville-based record company, Reunion Records, to celebrate his second #1 radio hit. The monotone voice repeats the flight cancellation and Rich realizes that no flight is departing for Nashville...

No problem. Accustomed to winging it, Rich sleeps on the floor of the airport and takes the first flight to Nashville the next day. He grins as he steps off the plane and says, 'Did you save any cake for me?' Rich's affinity for adventure and boyish spontaneity make talking to him, listening to his music or attending his concert difficult to forget. Rich is obviously adaptable, but the unique spin on Mullins is that he's also wise.

It's no surprise that Rich has written two #1 songs, 1987's "Verge Of A Miracle" and the more recent, 'Awesome God." His songs, born out of real.life experiences, strike a universal chord in all of us moving us to actively pursue God In the eighties.

Rich's self-penned songs on Winds of Heaven...Stuff of Earth, his latest Reunion Records release, were born out of time spent in Thailand helping farmers dig septic tanks and plant fruit trees; they're colored by his experiences in the U.S. helping the American Indian; they're enhanced by the volumes of Kirkegaard philosophy he's ingested; and they're validated by his commanding knowledge of the Scriptures.

Rich received his first national recognition as the creative mind behind Amy Grant's "Sing Your Praise To The Lord," nominated for Song Of the Year in 1982.

Today, he has penned 29 of the 30 songs on his three albums. His most

recent release, *Winds of Heaven...Stuff of Earth*, is described as "reflecting Mullins global journey: featuring mandolins, fiddles, dulcimers as well as the ever-present synthesizers for the mix that is old world and contemporary." (Davy Courier News, Elgin, IL, September 14, 1988)

For the past three months, Rich and his band have performed concerts across the United States. Both old and young listeners enjoy his simple and straightforward manner as he performs songs including the folk song, "If I Stand," the pop tune "Such A Thing As Glory," and the simple hymn "Awesome God." During this song audience members usually break into a soft and tender a capella chorus. "'Awesome God' creates a magic moment," says Rich. "It reminds you that this world is not your home. The Lord is working and we are affected."

Rich talks conversationally to the crowd during performances. He often takes a swig from his jug of mineral water between tunes, and he may even wander off stage during the show in search alone of the nine musical Instruments he plays. The performer is truly down-to-earth and simplistic in his approach to life, How appropriate that he sings of simple truth.

During Rich's recent travels to Guatemala and his three-month tour of the U.S., he discovered a simple truth about action. The common thread that runs through his experiences is learning the importance of being a proactive and not a reactive Christian. He admits that he's wasted a lot of energy in the past by taking action based on his own emotional reaction rather than on God's direction. He is learning that its not a matter of taking action, but of taking appropriate action.

"We don't need any more nice people who are content doing nice things. What we really need are solid, spirit controlled people who are willing to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. Nice people don't want to get involved."

"While people were being packed into trains and carried to concentration camps, nice people did what they were told, went to their jobs and collected their pay. It's not nice to protest the murdering of babies or nuclear war," continues Rich. "And nice people certainly don't rock the boat by interrupting engrossing conversation at a dinner party to talk about Jesus."

Rich compares being "conformed" and being "transformed." He states,

"You usually think of combating 'conforming to the lower nature' with action. You know, staying away from dirty movies and raunchy music, resisting letting people pressure you into things, and basically fleeing the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and the pride of life. But you don't as readily associate action and a lot of hard work with 'transformation by the renewing of your mind'. Concerned Christians should focus not on 'doing' but on 'renewing' by studying the Scriptures and seeking God."

According to Rich, transforming your mind, like getting in shape, requires consistent hard work. You pay careful attention to working out, avoiding certain foods, and getting proper rest. "Transforming our minds requires practicing loving, solitude, and devotion," says Rich.

"There are things I would rather not deal with. It's easier to ignore the gravity of life, to be lazy and unchallenged and cool towards people. But transformation means coming into an awareness that God is the head of the church and the direction giver. It's taking on the ministry we were called to do and being used the way he wants to use us."

Rich uses the Bible story of Mary and Martha to illustrate both the proactive and reactive Christian that he discusses. When Jesus visited the home of the two women, Martha busied herself by scurrying around and preparing a meal to serve Him. Mary, on the other hand, sat at the Masters feet and listened. Mary chose the better thing.

"The key is making yourself available to Him and putting yourself in a place where the spirit can work in your life," says Rich, adding, "God is not pleased with the talented, or the doer or the musician...but with the faithful."

This month, he returns to his new home in Wichita, Kansas, where he recently moved to be in a church where "people are concerned and expect the best of me." He leads worship, preaches on occasion, and helps with an enthusiastic youth group.

"The reason I'm a Christian is not because someone sang to me or preached to me, but because someone loved me and proved I was of worth. My wish is that I can love more than I can sing or preach."

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An Honest to God Original

Bill Bilsley

He's nothing if not honest. And he wouldn't have it any other way. Deep thinking and intelligent, yet sensitive and self-effacing, Rich Mullins is an original who says what he thinks and sings what he feels, and his credo in life proves his primary allegiance: "It's not what people think of me that's important, it's what God thinks of me."

Evidently Mullins doesn't need to worry too much about negative feedback from his friends or his fans. His music is becoming more popular all the time, and unlike many other performers, it is filled with his own thoughts and feelings. Like his first album Pictures in the Sky, his second album released by Reunion in February, contains only cuts written and co-written by Mullins.

Not that his songwriting ability has ever been in question. His second album only reinforces what everyone in the Christian Music industry knew when his first composition, "Sing Your Praise to the Lord," was sung by Amy Grant on Age to Age and nominated for "Song of the Year" by the Gospel Music Association. "What a lyricist!" Cash Box extolled with the release of his debut album, Rich Mullins, in 1986.

The unexpected - and there seems to be a lot of that in Mullins' life - is his vocal ability. A behind-the-scenes songwriter for years, he's now singing his own stuff, and he's singing it well. He proved it last year when he accompanied Amy Grant on her phenomenally successful "Unguarded" tour.

It's the message behind the music, however, that remains Mullins' primary motivation. "I like to sing," he says. "But I need to write. What I say is more important than how I say it, and I'll keep saying it whether or not I get

recognized for it."

This desire to communicate to others about God and His love began when Rich was in high school in Indiana. "I felt sad," he recalls, "because I was getting ready to go to a bible school (Cincinnati Bible College), and yet most of my friends didn't even know about my faith. So I decided to have a concert of my beliefs. I sang for them not because I wanted them to hear me sing, but because I wanted them to hear the message about God."

To further spread the message, Mullins became a youth minister in a local church while studying at Cincinnati Bible College. He began working with Zion Ministries in Cincinnati and performing with their bands at retreats and local churches around the country. It was while they were performing in Nashville in 1981 that Mike Blanton heard some of the songs Rich had written. Blanton chose "Sing Your Praise to the Lord" for Amy Grant's album and signed Mullins on as a writer for Blanton/Harrell.

Between 1981 and 1985, Rich spent most of his time writing songs, a vocation he has been perfecting since he began composing at the age of four. Twenty-eight years of songwriting experience is certainly paying off when you have artists like Amy Grant, Debby Boone, and Benny Hester singing your material.

Undoubtedly what these artists sense in Mullins' music is the same thing that appeals to his listeners - honesty of feelings and a lack of fear toward expressing doubts. "The main thing I have to do in my music is be honest," says Mullins, and that includes discussing the struggles that have been a part of his faith. "I'm not ashamed to admit that I've had struggles in my faith. As a matter of fact, I believe they're necessary and even fruitful because it is in the midst of struggles that you come to know God better."

Mullins sang about the pain involved in being a Christian in his first album, Rich Mullins. Contained in that album are "personal, vivid songs that depict a man struggling with his anger toward a non-committed world," writes the music editor of the Nashville Banner. Rich's anger is also directed at the world's unfairness: the fact that wealth and recognition are often lavished upon successful Christian entertainers while the material reward of many ministers and Christian teachers is, next to nothing, even though their message is the same. "I don't think it's fair to put a price tag on ministry," he says. "I do not want so much to be a star as I would like to be a servant."

Mullins' second album, Pictures in the Sky, is the hopeful one. In these songs he has chosen to celebrate life and God's goodness. "Overall, I'm a happy person," he says. "I love people, I love life, and I love God for giving me life. As you get older, you appreciate things more, you start reseeing things that were only important to you as a child, things like the clouds and the birds. I don't think we're ever without an opportunity to be grateful for the world around us."

Finding joy in the "little" things - the birds, the clouds, his dog Curry, and even his truck, which he's nicknamed Nellie - is probably what keeps Rich Mullins close to God. He's perfectly happy living one day at a time and doing what he does best: Putting honesty into his songs - honesty with himself, with others and with God.

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Mullin' Things Over

Robin Frazier

"A lot of this album has to do with celebrating, just saying, 'Man, I am really thankful to God that He's brought me to the place He's brought me.'" So says Rich Mullins about his new release, Pictures In The Sky, on which he offers a picture of himself and a sketch of what's on his mind.

Take "Screen Door," for instance. The songwriter says, "I just think it's a funny song. It has a heavy spiritual message, but I'd rather people enjoy it than sit around and ponder it. I'm really sick of all this heavy-handed Christianity. Musicians take themselves too seriously. They should have more fun, and they should stop preaching unless that's what God has called them to do. If I want to hear a sermon, I'll go to my church, thank you."

With tongue in cheek, Mullins readily offers his own estimation of his talent. "I'm not an overly humble person, but I'd like to have a different face. I'm sure there's something to be said for my voice - but I'm not sure what! I don't have much sex appeal and I'm not a lot of fun on stage, but I would not pretend to think I don't write good songs. That would be stupid."

This man with the wacky sense of humor certainly doesn't shy away from more serious matters. One dominant theme in his work is death. In fact, Rich's all-time favorite of his own songs, "Elijah", and his favorite from Pictures, "Be With You", address the subject.

"Well, that's the only thing I know I'm going to do in my life. I don't know if I'll be a success, a failure, married, single...but I do know that sooner or later, I'm going to die. The finality of that is kind of like God's little joke. No matter how cool you think you are, you will decompose."

"Most people live most of their lives out ignoring death. Anything that will remind us, we remove from sight. This obsession with immortality is a bizarre thing. What that tells me, though, is we must be immortal."

His music career, he figures, won't last half that long. "Youth ministry is my first love. I figure you can't be a Christian musician all your life. I mean, you have to grow up."

Actually, he's not all that thrilled with the Christian music business as is and he has some definite ideas about mainstream music as well. First, the mainstream.

Mullins praises the likes of Peter Gabriel, Bruce Springsteen, Bruce Cockburn, and Bob Dylan. But "an awful lot of the other music I hear today bores me to tears," he says. "I was thrilled when Bruce Hornsby came out. Man, this is music that people should listen to."

Now to his thoughts on Christian music. "Part of my frustration listening to Christian music is that I hear people yelling at me who don't even know me. And I think, 'what gives you the right? You have not validated your sermon to me by loving me.' I think I have a limited ministry potential in the Christian music business because the people who changed my life were not the people who sang to me. They were the people who **loved** me."

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Melinda Scruggs

You may not know his name, but you know this person's work. To his credit are "Sing Your Praise to the Lord," "Doubly Good to You," and "Love of Another Kind" (all recorded by Amy Grant), "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" (Benny Hester), and "O Come All Ye Faithful (Debby Boone). Now this songwriter is singing his own songs. Rich Mullins has moved from behind the scenes and into the spotlight of his own concerts.

What happens in one of his concerts? Mullins responds thoughtfully: "I know that I am more entertained when I am challenged, when I feel like something significant has happened. When I play for people, I want something significant to happen. I don't expect it to be a life-changing experience every time for everybody, but I want it to be challenging and spiritually provocative."

Mullins' message is, to say the least, "provocative." What he hopes to communicate in his concerts and on his soon-to-be released and self-titled album is, first, that life is very good despite the hard times. Echoing Paul's epistles, Rich adds that "you should be glad you're alive and look forward to being dead."

Mullins also speaks to people who are afraid to feel things. He sees people today who are afraid of being lonely, of being in love, of being hungry, and of being fat. His words to them? "I try to encourage them to deal with those fears. Life is not so big and scary that you can't live it."

Most important to Rich, though, is his attempt to paint a picture of who Christ is and what He requires of His followers. An insightful observer of today's culture, he comments, "I think many people confuse being comfortable in their churches and society and feeling good about themselves as being Christianity. Instead, I see Christianity as calling us out of our society - out of our conventions for the sake of changing them for Him."

Rich also notes that although his audiences of college and high school age people are mostly "churched," he generally receives a good response from people who don't attend church. He suggest that "most unchurched people are not unchurched because they don't have convictions. They're unchurched because, for them, the church is the pits and because they want religion with depth to it."

What is the background of this person who wants to offer his audience songs with substance and a religion with depth? He grew up in the church - actually in many churches. His family attended the Friends Church and later the Christian Church when he was young. In junior high, Rich sang in an interdenominational youth choir and was influenced by Baptist and Methodist friends. After high school, he attended Cincinnati Bible College and worked as a youth minister in a local Methodist church. He left college and his job to work with Zion Ministries where he performed with their band.

In the summer of 1981 the group appeared at the Koinonia Coffeehouse in Nashville, Tennessee. It was there that a copy of the group's custom album - and album composed of songs written by Rich - made its way into the hands of Mike Blanton. At the time, Blanton was looking for one more song for Amy Grant's Age to Age album. Rich's "Sing Your Praise to the Lord" was perfect, Amy recorded it, and Blanton/Harrell signed Mullins as a writer.

Rich spent the next few years developing his songwriting skills. During a sabbatical from the music scene in the winter of 1983, he served as interim music minister for a small church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It was then that he decided it was time for him to focus on being an artist as well as a writer. He put together a demo of his songs as he would perform them and sent it to Blanton/Harrell. That demo tape sparked an interest and enthusiasm which led the production team to sign him to their Reunion Records label.

How does Rich describe the message of his first album? He points to "Save Me" as the key song. Rich explains, "To be honest, my prayer is more often 'serve me' than 'save me.' When you say, 'save me,' you imply that you are willing to do and be the things that come with a saved life. And I'm not always there."

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A Grief Observed (an essay)

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/essay.html

Lynn Prescott

October 17, 1997

No matter how much I pretend his death made some sort of sense - even in my most honest denial - I find that I am no more than a liar and the truth is not in me.

I found myself thinking about Mary standing at the foot of her son with a sword thrust through her soul wondering if Mrs. M. would be grieving less and in one rare selfless moment I am pulled outside of myself and concerned about her pain. Another being outside the center of my own universe.

My arms would wrap around her and enfold much as John or the other women who stand gazing with her - women - (tenderhearted creatures that we are) seem to be more adept at holding death's hand. It isn't that we hurt less, I think it's just that we understand more. I can't begin to fathom her grief. Words can neither produce him nor raise him from the dead. We spend hours (I have spent weeks, will likely spend months maybe even years) untangling our webs of emotion - that peculiar and particular emotion we know as Grief.

Not only has the world suffered a loss, the Christian music world a great musician, but a mother has lost her son. Standing unobserved at the foot of his cross with a sword thrust through her soul. Suffering the deepest of all sufferings - that of a parent outliving her own child.

What can I do but stand silently - invisibly beside her, throw my arms around her maternal shoulders and sob out for her tears too deep to shed. There is nothing noble about my actions - as in every story she is still the strong one and I the one who is weak - she is the one bearing me up as I pretend to help bear her burden - knowing that her reality is she bears this

burden of grief alone. A lone widow bereaved of her son.

Jesus appeared to me in a dream Valentine's day morning at approx. 6:45 am. He was wearing the face of Rich Mullins. I didn't understand then what I understand now. If Rich be hid with Christ in God then what was revealed should comfort my ravaged heart - my bleeding soul. As the days slip by the joy sets in. The unspeakably beautiful unfolds.

A friend trying to console me(out of utter frustration I think) gave me one of those pat religious lines that I have come to so despise. I understood she was trying to put a bandaid on my immortal wound (and I love her for that) I was not angry - I was running a 101 temperature at the time and could have cared less. But it is typical of human response to grief - when we are no longer in the driver's seat and have lost all sense of control - there is a Force as beyond us as a hawk is from the moon and we feel we need to say something religious to reinstate our equilibrium. She said "well God will use anything to..." I thought yeah - God made an ass speak to Baalam too... so what's your point?! But I had a revelation that very moment - I realized that grief is as individual as our thumbprint - and it is our own road to hoe(so to speak) a road which we each walk alone and share with no one else on this earth except the one who has gone before us into Gethsemane. The One who sweated great drops of blood red passion and just one of those drops was(is) powerful enough to sustain all of us through this very dark night of our soul. In this our wake of one we loved so.

A work mate who knows I love Lewis downloaded something from a website and put it lovingly into my box. (He's Israeli and Lewis carried him through his childhood - what an odd awareness) . His timing both uncanny and eerily relevant.

A quote from the LA Times - Sunday Home Edition - Book Review Page 8 - the author says "what Lewis said once could expect of great literature/music(my insert): "Literary/Musical(my insert) experience heals the wound without undermining the privilege of individuality. There are mass emotions which heal the wound: but they destroy the privilege. In them, our separate selves are pooled and we sink back into sub individuality but in reading great literature/listening to great music(my insert) I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. I see with myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do."

Here I must comment that Rich Mullins shared this in common with Lewis - Mullins the Musician - Lewis the Literarian. He - like Lewis managed to achieve the "everyman". That became apparent to me scrolling down the miles of condolences. But the mass comfort(if there be any) is that we have more brethren than we knew. Like Elijah in our cave, God speaks and says; "you are certainly not alone."

To end my jabberwocky - a quote from A.N. Wilson's "C.S. Lewis - a Biography".

He says of Lewis, "here is a man destined it seemed to write whole and beautiful works out of the pain of his unhealable childhood wounds - in other words - an artist blessed and cursed with the motive that fires all art but one who would go to his grave still bleeding. For in the sacrament of Art, the Artist is the Redeemer and we are washed and made whole in his blood."

I think I could safely say the same applies to Rich Mullins. Rich died for us as Jack died for us. Both surrendering themselves completely to the cross of their art. Both with wounds that so freely and so visibly bled. The same wounds that have washed us and helped make us whole. Now it would be quite foolish to bow down and worship either of them for it. They have returned to the God from which they came. They came to do the will of the Father. I think if there's a jewel of wisdom left behind for us it would be this; "Go and do likewise."

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The Lighthouse Electronic Magazine Article

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/lighthouse-electronic-magazine-sep2597.html

Automobile Accident Claims Life but Not Legacy of Rich Mullins

Rich Mullins, 1955-1997

The Lighthouse Electronic Magazine

September 25, 1997

NASHVILLE, TN-Contemporary Christian singer/songwriter Rich Mullins was killed in an automobile accident late Friday, September 19, in LaSalle County, Illinois. Mitch McVicker, who performed with Mullins was also involved in the accident and is listed in critical condition. Mullins is survived by his mother, two older sisters and two younger brothers.

Although the accident claimed Mullins' life, his legacy will continue through the music that he recorded during his ten year career as an artist at Reunion Records. Current Reunion Records president and former president of the Gospel Music Association, Bruce Koblish said, "We are all deeply saddened at the tragic loss of Rich Mullins. Rich's life and his songs always reflected truth and honesty, stripped of all superficiality and conventionality. He challenged us to live life with purpose and meaning and to know God intimately. The legacy he left us with will live on through his music."

Mullins' critically acclaimed career began with his first self titled recording in 1986. Between 1986 and 1996, Mullins recorded nine records for Reunion including his last recording Songs, a collection of Rich's most well-known hits. Mullins is perhaps best known for writing the church standards Awesome God, which in 1989 was voted one of the top three songs of the decade by the Christian Research Report, and Sometimes By Step, in addition to eight other number one songs. During his life, Mullins was nominated for twelve Dove Awards and had his songs recorded by artists such as Amy Grant with Sing Your Praise to the Lord, Love of Another Kind and Doubly Good to You.

Mullins was a skilled songwriter and a proficient musician who mastered the guitar, piano and hammer dulcimer. Reed Arvin, long time friend and producer of seven recordings for Mullins said, "Rich Mullins was the best writer in contemporary Christian music, and he is utterly irreplaceable. He wasn't really happy, if happy means contented. But he turned his discontent into art, separating himself from the careerists that thought it would be neat to make money out of Jesus. The first thing I am going to do when I see him in heaven is beg his forgiveness for being so inept at bringing his songs to light."

Many of the artists that Rich impacted most were those in the Reunion "family". Carolyn Arends states, "Rich Mullins was my hero long before I met him. Like thousands of his

fans, I treasured up certain lines of his songs the way that you store away all the sunsets, prayers and late-night conversations that break through your consciousness and change you forever. Rich seemed to have more than his share of startling, profound, life giving insights into the heart of God-more than even the usual quota for prophets, poets, or saints-and they rhymed."

Michael W. Smith states, "Rich Mullins' life and music has impacted me more than anyone I know. He had the ability to take the mundane and make it majestic. Nobody on this planet wrote songs like he did and I feel we've lost one of the only true poets in our industry. I love Rich Mullins...and no one will ever know how much I'll miss him."

Mac Powell, lead singer of Reunion Records' Third Day said, "This is a big loss for so many people. We're really glad that we had the opportunity to know Rich and only wish that we could have spent more time with him. I have been very affected by his music through the years, and I know that I will miss him. His influence will live on through his music."

His music was not the only way that Rich touched peoples' lives. He spent much of his time working with Native Americans in the southwest and with Compassion International. Mullins once stated, "I hope that I would leave a legacy of joy, a legacy of real compassion, because I think there is a great joy in compassion. I don't think that you can know joy apart from caring deeply about people-caring enough to actually do something."

Both the Mullins and the McVicker families have asked that in lieu of flowers, donations should be made to Compassion International, c/o Rich Mullins Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 7000, Colorado Springs, CO, 80933. Cards may be sent to Kid Brothers of St. Frank, P.O. Box 11526, Wichita, KS, 67202.

A memorial service will be held at 10 a.m. on Friday, September 26, at Christ Presbyterian Church, 2323 Old Hickory Blvd. A public service will be held in Wichita, KS, at 7 p.m. Saturday, September 27, at Henry Levitt Arena on the campus of Wichita State University. For more information about this service, please call 316-262-7159.

"If my life is motivated by an ambition to leave a legacy, what I would probably leave is a legacy of ambition. But, if my life is motivated by the power of God's spirit in me and the awareness of the indwelling Christ, if I allow His presence to guide my motives, that's the only time I think we really leave a great legacy."--Rich Mullins 1955-1997

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JesusFest '98 Helps Carry On Work of Rich Mullins

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/wichitaeagle4.html

Day in the sun ends with concert fund-raiser for foundation formed to continue recording artist's work with Native American youth.

Laura Addison

August 31, 1998

Cessna Stadium on the Wichita State University campus was a busy place Sunday.

Jesus Fest '98, an annual event sponsored by Central Christian Church, ran all day and into the night, ending with a concert that attracted nearly 6,000 people. The concert raised money for a foundation that will continue the work of Rich Mullins, a Christian singer and songwriter who died a year ago.

Sunday's activities began with a morning church service on the stadium field, before it got hot. Then came the all-church picnic with food vendors and carnival rides.

By 5 o'clock, hundreds of folks & \$45 some notably sunburned, but otherwise looking none the worse for the heat - were already in their seats for the 6 p.m. show. Some carried in lawn chairs and blankets, pushed strollers and carried kids and coolers. Others took their families into the bleachers, looking for shade.

They came to hear headliner Gary Chapman, singer and writer of contemporary Christian songs, and other bands and speakers. But they were also pleased to be contributing to The Legacy of a Kid Brother of St. Frank, a Native American outreach, a foundation recently formed to continue the work Mullins had supported for several years.

Eric Rennie sat among family and friends.

"I don't get to see these guys very much," he said. "We're just out having a good evening."

But he is glad the money is going to a worthy cause, he added.

"From everything I've heard about Rich Mullins, he was a man of integrity," said Rennie. "I'm glad (the money) will go for that and not for some fly-by-night purpose."

Mullins died in an auto accident last September and family members must wait for his estate to be settled before endowing the foundation. Proceeds from the concert, for which the entertainers waived their performance fees, will start the work.

Mullins' brother, David, moved his family to Wichita two months ago - after nine years in ministry in West Virginia - to begin work on the foundation.

"The family wanted to see the ministry continued," David Mullins told the crowd that grew to 5,800. Others had been thinking toward the same goal, said Alyssa Loukota, who will head the foundation with Mullins.

"We both thought, 'It doesn't feel right that just because Rich died, the work should stop,' " said Loukota. She formerly worked with Compassion International, a ministry based in Colorado Springs dedicated to child development in Third-World countries, now extended to children in inner cities, Native American reservations and the rural South.

"Rich was much more willing to go farther in caring for others and trying to live as Christ wanted us to live our lives," Loukota said. Then the music of seven musical acts filled the stadium, often causing hands to clap and toes to tap, and sometimes bringing audience members of all ages to their feet in shared songs of praise.

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Friends Call Mullins' Award Overdue

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/wichitaeagle5.html

Former Wichitan won a posthumous Dove Award for Artist of the Year on Thursday, and friends wonder what he might have thought

Denise Neil

April 26, 1998

Cheryl Hurley cried as she watched Thursday night's Dove Awards on television.

Some of her tears fell out of happiness. After 15 years and 12 nominations, her late friend, Christian singer Rich Mullins, was named the Gospel Music Association's Artist of the Year, finally garnering the recognition his friends always believed he deserved.

Others were tears of pain. Seeing that Mullins wasn't in the audience to receive his award helped Hurley reach a difficult realization: her friend of 10 years is never coming back.

"For me, his winning was kind of a closure on everything," said Hurley, a Wichita concert promoter and one of Mullins' former neighbors and close friends.

Mullins was killed in a car accident in Illinois last September while on his way to Wichita for a performance. He also lived in Wichita for several years.

And the many friends he still has here watched Thursday night's telecast from Nashville with great interest.

They were touched by a tribute to Mullins, performed by Christian musicians Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith and Phil Keaggy.

They were relieved to see their friend win the Dove Award, contemporary

Christian music's equivalent of the Grammy Award.

And they wondered what Mullins, an introspective soul who wasn't too impressed with the celebrity lifestyle, would have thought had he lived to receive the award in person.

"The only thing you can know for sure is that you can't know for sure what he would think," Hurley said. "You could always count on that you couldn't count on how he'd feel about something."

Mullins, who grew up in Richmond, Ind., recorded nine albums during his career, which took off in the early 1980s. Singer Grant noticed his first album and then recorded a song he wrote, "Sing Your Praise to the Lord," which became one of her biggest hits.

After attending Cincinnati Bible College, Mullins moved to Wichita in the late 1980s to join the congregation of Central Christian Church. While he was here, he earned a music education degree at Friends University, which he completed in 1995.

He was best known for his hit song "Awesome God." But he was also known as someone who didn't find the business side of Christian music too awesome at all.

Mullins didn't always fit into the contemporary Christian music world, said Kevin Brocksieck, a fellow musician and composer who performed with Mullins when they were students at Friends.

He shunned the pop aspects of Christian music and instead drew on his love of almost every other musical style - gospel, rock, Celtic and classical music, Brocksieck said.

That made him somewhat of a Nashville outsider, said another friend, Bob Michaels, who is program director at contemporary Christian station KTLI, Light 99.1-FM.

In fact, Michaels said, the whole scene made Mullins uncomfortable - so much so that he attended only one Dove Awards show, back at the very start of his career.

And Michaels remembered that Mullins felt so out of place at that show that at a reception, he hid himself behind a buffet table and began serving

desserts.

Deep down, Mullins would have been satisfied that his years of work were finally recognized, Michaels said. But the actual Dove trophy would not have meant much to him.

"I think Rich is probably laughing his head off today," Michaels said. "He thought it all was a farce - the whole idea of Christianity and commerce mixed together."

Still, in Wichita and across the country, Mullins' legacy has inspired much commerce since his death.

Better Book Room, 358 N. Main, has become sort of an international headquarters for Mullins merchandise, said music department manager John Overholt.

Just recently, the store sent shipments to seven countries, including Ireland, Malaysia and Australia, and it receives orders from across the nation as well.

People want Mullins' albums, his videos, a recording of the musical he wrote, "Canticle of the Plains."

They want T-shirts. They want copies of his book, "Home," released last month. They're already asking about another album, scheduled for release in late June.

The Kansas Cosmosphere, which debuted a Rich Mullins Christian Laser Light Show just before the singer died last September, originally planned to run the show - which mixes Mullins' music with high-tech laser visuals - through last Christmas, said Karen Siebert, marketing coordinator.

But it sells out nearly every weekend and has been extended, again and again. It's scheduled to continue through the summer.

Although his friends and fans have always known Mullins' worth, Michaels said, the music industry recognition was long overdue.

"People who knew him well felt that even though he was named Artist of the Year, it was more like a lifetime achievement award," he said.

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Remembering Rich

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/credo.html

Mary Beth Bonacci

Rich Mullins was, in many ways, THE contemporary Christian musician. His career spanned over 15 years. He released a total of nine albums, selling well over a million copies. He wrote Awesome God, the anthem of youth rallies everywhere. Rich was also what some people would call eccentric. He lived in a "hogan" (an eight-sided Indian structure, essentially a hut) on a reservation in Window Rock, Ariz. His wardrobe consisted primarily of ripped jeans, T-shirts and sweats. He shunned the sometimes glamorous lifestyle that comes with being a superstar in the Christian music world. I had the privilege of meeting Rich last New Year's Eve at a dinner and concert he performed here in Phoenix, and of getting to know him over several subsequent visits to Phoenix. He was an extraordinary, amazing man-nothing like what I expected. I expected someone who lived in the middle of nowhere to be somehow anti-social or at least socially awkward. He wasn't. He was very friendly and very relaxed. I expected someone so famous to have an ego. Rich had none. And I expected someone so holy to be solemn. Rich was hilariously funny.

He was also an incredible musician. A mutual friend describes the experience of first seeing Rich play: "Here's this guy in jeans who pulls out what looks like an old table and a couple of toothbrushes, and out comes the most beautiful music I've ever heard." The "table" was actually a hammer dulcimer, and it was one of the literally scores of unique instruments Rich used to create his amazing music.

But Rich was more than a musician. He was a poet. His lyrics were gorgeous - each song a celebration of God's creation, God's love and God's mercy. Sometimes prophetic (What more have I in heaven besides you, Jesus; and what better could I hope to find down here on earth?), sometimes theological (It's about as useless as a screen door on a submarine; faith without works, baby, it just ain't happening), sometimes achingly personal (Hold me, Jesus, 'cause I'm shaking like a leaf. You've been king of my glory, won't you be my prince of peace?)

Rich understood, better than anyone I've ever known, the importance of purity of heart. His hero was Francis of Assisi (or "St. Frank," as he called him). He embraced poverty much as Francis did, living simply and setting his sights on the eternal. Quite simply, Rich Mullins loved God. The things of the next life were constantly present to him. He understood the world's power to distract us from our eternal goal, and he took

extraordinary steps to prevent that distraction in his own life. Those steps, to be perfectly honest, seemed a little drastic to me when I first met him. But now it all makes sense. He was making an investment, and I'm betting that the dividends are paying off in a big way for him now. I want to end with a lyric from Rich's favorite of his own songs, Elijah:

*"When I leave I want to go out like Elijah
With a whirlwind to fuel my chariot of fire.
And when I look back on the stars,
It'll be like the candlelight in Central Park.
And it won't break my heart to say goodbye."*

Goodbye, Rich.

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Singer Planned to Enter Church

 kidbrothers.net/articles/credo2.html

Clare Donnelly

Rumors had circulated for years that Rich Mullins was on his way into the Catholic Church. To settle the issue Credo spoke with Fr. Matt McGinness, whose friendship with Mullins began in 1993 when, at no charge, Mullins performed a concert and led a prayer service for 6,000 pilgrims at the Denver World Youth Day. McGinness was director for youth ministries for the Diocese of Wichita. Today he is vocations director and chaplain of the Newman Center at Wichita State University.

"He got in touch with me that evening, as everyone was setting up for the concert. He said, 'You know, I'd really like to get with you one of these days real soon.' We talked about things Catholic and he'd ask all sorts of questions. I connected him with an RCIA program in the parish in which he lived," Fr. McGinness recalled. That was in 1995. Rich completed the program, but his journey was not yet finished.

"He told me that he knew he would make the switch to Catholicism someday but at this point he just wasn't ready." On his concert tours, Mullins regularly visited Fr. McGinness in Wichita. "A month ago it was becoming very evident, by his questions, that he was drawing very close to making that decision. He was attending Mass weekly if not more often. He just continued to ask questions. His theology was becoming more and more Catholic," Fr. McGinness said. The night before the accident, Mullins called Fr. McGinness and said, "This may sound strange, but I have to receive the body and blood of Christ." McGinness replied, "It doesn't sound strange at all, it sounds wonderful." They planned to meet Sunday morning after Mass. "I thought I was going to bring him into the Church on Monday, because of his tight schedule. But I've spoken with his friends in recent days, and he had told them that he had hoped to come in this October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi." Mullins never celebrated on earth the feast of his favorite saint. Instead, he died too suddenly the next night.

McGinness reflected, "Rich was already baptized, so it would be a Confirmation by desire, kind of like a Baptism by desire. And you know, I would pray for him as I would pray for any person, for the forgiveness of his sins and the repose of his soul. He was consciously, actively, excitedly seeking God through Jesus Christ. And you can't ask for more from any person."

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A Christian Songwriter Who Broke the Mold

 kidbrothers.net/articles/tribune3.html

Friday October 10, 1997

Lou Carlozo

Who was Rich Mullins? Most music enthusiasts who spotted his obituary three weeks ago had no idea, even though the singer-songwriter played the Rosemont Horizon in 1995 and sold albums by the hundreds of thousands.

Wire stories identified the 41-year-old Mullins, who died in a car crash near Peoria on Sept. 19, as a contemporary Christian artist. Yet that label hardly tells the whole story. In his shy humility and sharp humor, Mullins was as far from any self-righteous, Bible-thumping stereotype as a person could get.

In light of his passing, even Mullins fans and Christianmusic professionals might well ask the same question: Who was Rich Mullins?

Judged against the slick, cookie-cutter acts peddled by many Christian record labels, Mullins was anything but typical. Just as his songs embraced eclectic textures from strident rock to Celtic folk, Mullins' faith reflected a man unafraid to show his warts, wrestle with God and seek answers removed from any moral or political majority.

First, the music. In a career spanning seven albums in 11 years, Mullins matured from a sophomoric-but-ambitious neophyte into a master craftsman who, creatively speaking, deserves the same praise as Sting, the Chieftains and Paul Simon, artists Mullins idolized. And it all began, as Mullins liked to say, pretty much by accident.

The son of Indiana farmers and raised a Quaker, Mullins was in his late 20s and leading a cash-strapped retreat ministry in Cincinnati when his big break came. His uncle lent the ministry \$1,000 to do its own album, and somehow a copy found its way to Nashville. There, "Sing Your Praise To

The Lord" caught the attention of Amy Grant's management. Grant, already a Christian pop star, turned the song into a hit on her 1982 album "Age to Age"; four years later, Mullins was opening for Grant and signed a deal of his own on Reunion Records.

It wasn't a fluke. With a voice somewhere between Don Henley and Marc Cohn, Mullins was also adept at guitar and piano, and especially stunning on hammer dulcimer, an instrument he played with a weaver's grace and skill. As a songwriter, Mullins will likely be remembered for Grant's hit and for the modern-day hymn "Awesome God," but his later material boasted a lyrical strength few tunesmiths, Christian or secular, can hope to match. Whether exploring emotions or evoking cinema-sharp landscapes, Mullins made his listeners see, feel and soar.

*And once I went to Appalachia for my father he was born
there
And I saw the mountains waking with the innocence of
children
And my soul is still there with them wrapped in the songs
they brought...*

Those lyrics are from "Here In America," the leadoff track to 1993's sweeping "A Liturgy, a Legacy and a Ragamuffin Band," arguably Mullins' finest achievement.

As a believer, Mullins hardly fit the Christian music business mold. Unlike many hopefuls who remake themselves in Nashville's image, Mullins came to town determined to be the industry's "bad boy," as he once put it.

Though he eventually stopped rebelling - "I became so boring trying to be bad that I gave up the pursuit," he recalled in a 1995 interview with CCM Magazine - Mullins was never comfortable playing by the unwritten rules in "Nash-Vegas," as Christian music insiders call it. The dirty little secret of Christian music is that, like any other business, it thrives on schmoozing, deals done on the golf course and slick marketing campaigns.

So, even as his record sales were climbing, Mullins made a move some considered career suicide: He moved to Wichita, re-enrolled in college and graduated from Friends University in May 1995 with dual degrees in music

and education.

Immediately afterward, he set out for the New Mexico desert to live in a trailer. He hoped to teach music to Navajo schoolchildren.

If some Christians praised him as musical missionary, Mullins dispelled any notions of sainthood with a slash of his trademark wit. "God never spoke to me and said, 'Go to New Mexico,' " Rich said in a Tribune interview last year. "That's why I think it's so ridiculous when people say, 'It's so noble that you're going to New Mexico.' It's no different than when someone says, 'I'm going to flip burgers in Pittsburgh.'"

While preparing for his new life in the desert, Mullins continued to pursue a less conventional spiritual path - not quite Protestant or Catholic, liberal or conservative. He embraced Brennan Manning's "The Ragamuffin Gospel," a book written, according to the original foreword, "not for the muscular Christians who have made John Wayne and not Jesus their hero... (but) for smart people who know they are stupid and honest disciples who admit they are scalawags."

And he revered St. Francis of Assisi, who became something of his role model. "He had a great grasp of Christian joy," Mullins said. "If you really want to be free, you have to be free of things."

Mullins also sought to free himself of blind political loyalties. "I used to be comfortable with the Religious Right supporting candidates who were careless with environmental issues," Mullins said in April. "Now I say, does that really reflect the mind of Christ, or is that the American way? It makes me very nervous about agreeing with the Liberal Left, who have given up on the idea of truth."

In the desert, Mullins did not want so much to bring God to the Native Americans as to make God's love visible through his actions. It did not work out as planned. The school at which he wanted to teach asked him to sign a statement of faith that was, in his view, too fundamentalist. Meanwhile, he wrote a musical about his hero St. Francis, recasting the saint as a starry-eyed cowboy. "Canticle of the Plains" opened to less-than-rave reviews at Wheaton College in April.

There was one high point to the Wheaton show, however. Before the musical, Mullins played an acoustic set accompanied by his protege and

roommate, 24-year-old singer-songwriter Mitch McVicker. Laid back and confident, McVicker showed much promise that night, brandishing a breezy vocal style that was equal parts Elvis Costello and Jackson Browne.

On the night he died, Mullins and McVicker were driving back to Wichita to play a benefit concert. Mullins' Jeep spun out of control and both men were thrown from the vehicle. A truck, swerving to avoid the Jeep, hit Mullins and killed him instantly. McVicker survived the accident, but was hospitalized with severe head injuries.

McVicker's recovery has been slow, but his health is improving. Should he someday resume his musical pursuits, it can only be hoped he will pick up where Mullins' shining star left off.

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An 'Awesome' Tribute to Mullins

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/wichitaeagle1.html

Suzanne Perez Tobias and Lori Lessner

September 28, 1997

They came by the thousands, in blue jeans, shorts and T-shirts - at least a few dozen with bare feet - to say good-bye to Rich Mullins.

About 5,000 friends, family members and fans gathered at Wichita State University's Henry Levitt Arena Saturday night for a service honoring the contemporary Christian artist's life and music and celebrating the God he worshipped.

Mullins, 41, was killed in a traffic accident Sept. 19 while on his way from Chicago to Wichita for a benefit concert. Mitchell McVicker, a friend who was riding with Mullins, remained in serious condition Saturday at a hospital in Peoria, Ill. He is conscious and able to move, hospital officials said.

The service opened shortly after 7 p.m. with a collection of Mullins' music, sung by the Praise Band and accompanied by an enthusiastic crowd.

"The world is not my home," they sang. "I'm just passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue."

Joining the chorus were Melanie and Chris Castleberry, who traveled with their five children from Houston to attend the service.

"This news was so devastating, but it's wonderful to be here with all these people who know how you're feeling," Melanie Castleberry said.

"We've wanted to come to Wichita for so long - to see the Keeper of the Plains and all those things Rich talked about - and we're finally here. I just wish so badly that this wasn't the reason."

People who traveled great distances from Indiana, Texas, Wisconsin and other states to attend the nearly three-hour service experienced a wide range of emotions Saturday evening from laughter to sadness, from pity to confusion about, "Why Rich?" and "Why now?"

Laughter had to be mixed with the tears, his friends said. Otherwise they wouldn't have made it through the service.

The spectrum of emotions was evoked by the personal stories told and the music performed. The Praise Band started out with slow Christian ballads then moved to the upbeat "Sing Your Praise to the Lord" that had many people clapping and standing. Well-known pop Christian singer Michael W. Smith, one of Mullins' many friends in the Christian music community, also sang in a surprise tribute.

Mullins was not the only one remembered. The audience devoted many songs to God, noting it was important "to remember who it was that made him (Mullins) great," said Sam Howard, a college friend who asked Mullins to be the best man at his wedding.

In the numerous eulogies, friends remembered Mullins as a man who sometimes wore jeans replete with holes and who never could seem to find his keys, his checkbook or his airplane tickets. On a serious note, they said, he was a man who consciously, excitedly and actively sought out God and helped others to find him where he had been all along, in their hearts. His poetry and his music were his methods for achieving this.

Zach Payne a fan who came from Tulsa, said that while Mullins' musical talents are important, he will be remembered in history for the bright theologian he was.

Payne's family was one of a few dozen who arrived to the service at least four hours early to make sure they could get seats. The arena seats 10,600, and people filled about half that.

Lawn chairs and picnic blankets dotted the grass in front of the arena about 3:30 p.m. Some people passed the time reading paperback books or listening to radios while kids doodled with Magic Markers. Others ate fast food and introduced themselves to fellow out-of-towners.

"None of us have anything in common except that we are believers meeting here to show our appreciation for Christ," Payne said.

Jon Hunsbusher's co-workers in Burlington, Wis., know he went to a funeral service this weekend in Wichita to pay tribute to someone he didn't even know.

"I can't explain it," he said. "When someone famous dies, sure, you feel bad, but not like this. It feels like I lost a brother. I felt so close to him even though I met him only briefly after a concert."

Also remembered Saturday by Mullins' friends and fans is Mitchell McVicker. A friend who

was riding with Mullins when their Jeep flipped over, McVicker remained in serious condition Saturday at a hospital in Peoria, Ill. He is conscious and able to move, hospital officials said.

About 40 people helped organize Saturday's tribute, including band members who toured with Mullins, Wichita ministers, the Liturgical Dancers from Friends University and the Wichita Ballet Theatre.

Throughout the day, KTLI, 99.1-FM, a Christian radio station in Wichita, played Mullins' songs and reminded listeners of the upcoming memorial service.

Friends and fans who could not attend the service shared their grief in other ways, many of them sending e-mail condolences through the Internet or logging on to visit various Web pages.

At the service, anecdotes about Mullins' life were recounted in bits, with one friend likening the stories to pieces of a patchwork quilt. There were many to share.

This from Jim Smith, chaplain at Friends University:

Mullins had moved in with Smith and his wife for a short time a few years back. Not feeling quite at home, he took it upon himself to throw out the attic carpeting and remodel the entire room, maybe even add a Persian rug.

One thing about Mullins, though, is that he usually never finished anything he started because he couldn't stand the finality of it, Smith recalled.

If you ever see Mullins' video to "Hold me Jesus," Smith said, you'll know that it was shot in the attic that had no carpeting.

Pieces of a patchwork quilt.

Mullins was a private person who wrote a page of prose a day that no one ever read. One time he left a notebook full of personal musings in his studio. Rather than retrieving it, he asked a good friend to destroy it without opening it. That friend took it to a dumpster. Mullins' secrets now lie in a Nashville dump, under four or five years of trash.

The Indiana native and 1995 Friends University graduate had recorded nine albums and had more than 50 hit records in his career, which began in the early 1980s. A song he wrote, "Sing Your Praise to the Lord," became one of the biggest hits for Christian recording artist Amy Grant.

Mullins had been nominated many times for Dove Awards, Christian contemporary

music's equivalent of the Grammy Awards.

Death was not a subject Mullins avoided. The first time he forced himself to "dig under a lot of the cliches of the Christian faith" and confront the fact that he is "going to be dead someday too" was when he wrote the song, "Elijah," he recounted in a publication in 1992.

It was his favorite song, which he wrote around the time his great-grandma died and John Lennon was shot. With "Elijah," he was sending a message that, 'You know, someday I'm going to die, and I want to die good,' friends recounted at Saturday's service.

Coincidentally, just six or seven weeks ago, friend Andy Hansen had asked Mullins to sing "Elijah" at his funeral.

"Now they'll just have to play the tape when I die because we'll be singing it together in Heaven," Hansen said.

More pieces of a patchwork quilt, this time in the form of euphemisms Mullins coined. Occasionally, friends turned to each other during these moments and locked eyes or nodded their familiar with the stories.

The bachelor's take on marriage was that for people too weak to handle celibacy, God gave spouses. For people who couldn't handle spouses, God gave celibacy. He also believed that when you die, you are neither married nor single and should live your life in light of that.

"Your identity is something other than your marital status or income," a friend recalled him saying.

Another Rich on Rich: "When it's all said and done, everyone only has two things left to say: 'I forgive you' and 'Thank you.'"

His thank you came Saturday night, when the tribute ended with thoughts of God and all he has brought into their lives foremost on people's minds, and thoughts of Mullins second.

Mullins always closed his pop music concerts with the audience singing God's praises. He was happy hearing that, not cat calls and hoots for an encore from himself.

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Palladium-Item Article

↑ kidbrothers.net/articles/palladium-item-sep2597.html

Rich Mullins Remembered

Family, friends and fans express their sorrow over loss of Christian musician

Rachel E. Sheeley

Palladium-Item

Thursday, September 25, 1997

Whitewater, Ind. - Some knew him as Richard, others as Rich. To his family, he was Wayne.

Whitewater native Richard, "Rich" Wayne Mullins kept his public life as a well-known Christian musician very separate from his family life. His death in a car accident Friday brought the two sharply together.

"Our condolences go out to (his fans), to those that he touched. We realize this is their loss, too" said his sister. "We know they need closure. We need closure, too"

Many turned out for visitation at Whitewater Christian Church, not far from where Mullins grew up.

Friends and fans have shared their grief through an Internet web site. The site had received more than 9,000 e-mail messages by late Tuesday, and the web page had had more than 93,000 visits.

Local Christian bookstores are sold out of Mullins' music.

While the fans mourn the man who brought them "Our God Is an Awesome God" and other Christian music favorites, his family will miss the man who played the piano so loudly they couldn't watch TV, the man who argued for the fun of it, who had a thirst for learning, who had a good sense of humor and a terrible sense of direction - the man who never met a stranger and rarely came home alone.

"When he was home, he was Wayne," said Mullins' mother.

"He wasn't famous to us," said Mullins' brother-in-law.

Framed album covers and record awards earned by the musician fill one wall in the Mullins family home. When his family gathered to talk about him, they remembered a son, a brother, and uncle - a man who ministered through his music. Their memories were

shared with laughter and emotional silences.

"He never did anything halfway, no matter what he did," his sister said.

Take the time he decided to drive a car into the family farm's field. The memory of how he managed to do the impossible - get every tire stuck in a different hole - left the family laughing.

"He was the only one who could leave Dad speechless," said Mullins' brother.

"He thought it was his job to bring culture into the family," said Mullins' brother. "If he ate Japanese food and liked it, he thought you should eat Japanese food and like it, too."

Mullins once took his sister to eat bean curd soup.

"He couldn't understand how I could not want to experience bean curd soup," she said.

Mullins was always learning and sharing.

"He just always gave," said his cousin.

"Wayne literally saved my son's life," his cousin said. "About 2 years ago my son dropped out of college, he was struggling...somehow we figured my son could work for Wayne on tour. It just turned his life around. Our prayers were answered. Wayne had a vision for him and he gave him direction. For him to help my son that way, it was the greatest gift he could give me."

"The last time I saw him he gave me a book, and I own a bookstore. He had it in his back pocket. It was frayed and the corners were bent. He never visited me that he didn't bring me a gift, a cookie. That constant giving - it's just irreplaceable, it leaves a big void," his cousin said.

Mullins gave his sister hope when it seemed like a tragedy that her son was born with a cleft lip and palate.

"I was going through all of the emotions of a mother," his sister said. "He said, 'Don't take this the wrong way. I felt proud that God thought enough of my sister to give her a child that was going to need the love she could give him.' That gave me hope, just the fact that he believed in me."

"Whenever I get extremely down, I always listen to my uncle's music," said Mullins' nephew. Three months ago, at a concert given in Fort Wayne by Mullins, the two got to talk. "I said, 'Uncle Wayne, I don't know you very well, but there's some people that you

touch through your music. I realize who you are now, your mission is music.' He said 'Thank you,' and gave me a hug."

"From the beginning, he was special," said Mullins' sister. "When he watched westerns, he would just sit there and bawl when an Indian would get killed."

When Rich Mullins was 4, he found a sure way to annoy his 6-year-old sister. When she'd practice her piano lessons, she said, he would come in and play with ease what she was working on. So she quit taking lessons. "How could I compete with that?" she said.

"Even his piano teacher had problems with him," said his mother.

He was a student of Mary Kellner.

"She would say, 'Now Richard, that sounds good, but you have to play it like it's written,'" his mother remembers.

"His music was in his heart, not on the pages," his brother-in-law said.

"He was at his best when he was in a room alone with a piano," his sister said. "He could make that piano talk."

"He could make it cry, he could make it sing," his sister added.

His siblings said they appreciated his talents and weren't jealous of them. Sometimes, however, they were jealous that they had to share him.

"It just hurt that the world got so much of him and we got so little," Mullins' brother said.

"He was always so humble. He didn't think he was special at all," his sister said.

Mullins' brother said his brother spent most of his time in the music industry trying to get out. He wasn't in it for the money or the fame, but the ministry.

"I think if he could have found a better way to tell people about Christ, he would have chucked it all," said Mullins' brother-in-law. "But that was the way he could preach. With the music, they listened to him. That was just his avenue."

Mullins' sister, felt the impact of her brother's success when she went to see him perform at Radio City Music Hall in New York City.

"I saw the marquee, and it said 'Rich Mullins,' and it totally overwhelmed me, because that wasn't who I knew," his sister said.

After the concert, his sister saw what made Mullins different from other Christians stars. As he and Amy Grant left the buliding, a limousine was waiting.

"Amy got in the limo, and Wayne went around and jumped on the back of the equipment truck," his sister said. "That just flabbergasted me."

"He lived what he believed. In concert, it wasn't a big star up there, it was someone people could relate to," his sister said.

Mullins' brothers and sisters feel how they were raised helped make Mullins what he was. He paid tribute to his parents and his upbringing in the song, "First Family."

"He was a brother, but he was so much more than a brother to all of us," his sister said.

"He was just an extension of all of his grandparents, his parents," his sister said. "He has us all in him."

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Christian Songwriter Remembered for His Gifts

 kidbrothers.net/articles/indianapolisstar.html

Indiana Native Rich Mullins was killed in an accident in Illinois en route to a benefit

Eric C. Rodenberg

Richmond, Ind. - Like his song Elijah. Rich Mullins lived a whirlwind life, according to friends who gathered Monday in Whitewater.

Mullins, who died Friday In Illinois, grew up in Whitewater, a small Indiana community about eight miles northeast of Richmond. He went on to become one of the country's leading songwriters and singers of Christian music.

"When I leave, I want to go out like Elijah. with a whirlwind to fuel His chariot of fire. And when I look back on the stars, it will look like a candlelight in central Park, And it won't break my heart to say good-bye," Mullins wrote in Elijah.

"That's just the way he lived his life, like a whirlwind." longtime friend Gary Rowe of Indianapolis recalled. "He lived his life fast, deep, devoted and passionate. He was a (voracious) reader, and a thinker. The more he read, the more questions he had."

On the day of his death, Mullins had just finished a recording project with singer Mitchell McVicker. The two were driving to Wichita, Kansas, for a benefit concert when one of them - it isn't clear who was driving - lost control of the sport utility vehicle outside Lostant, about 75 miles south west of Chicago. Mullins was killed when he was ejected and run over by a semitrailer. McVicker suffered critical injuries.

Kathy Sprinkle of Whitewater said Mullins wrote his first song when be was 4. His great-grandmother taught him a great deal about music. He was very proud of being a 'birthright' Quaker: and although he didn't stay a Quaker, those early years helped mold his beliefs," she said.

Sprinkle said Mullins' father had Appalachian roots and that may have inspired Mullins to learn to play the hammered dulcimer and lap dulcimer.

A 10-time Dove Award nominee, Mullins recorded nine albums and wrote numerous songs for Christian stars like Sandi Patti, Debbie Boone and Amy Grant. His collaboration with Grant, Sing Your Praise to the Lord, and the 1988 recording, Awesome God, secured Mullins' reputation among listeners of Christian music.

Sprinkles said Mullins nurtured relationships. "Rich believed that people's lives don't change by preaching at them or singing to them. He believed that people's lives are changed by loving them and sharing with them. He was very transparent with who he was. He gave people hope."

Rowe, a minister of counselling at the East 91st Street Christian Church in Indianapolis, recalled the magnetism, power, and passion of Mullins' message during campus concerts at Cincinnati Bible College in the late 1970s.

"He was not polished at all. There has always been a rough edge to his music," Rowe said. "But he had a rapport with the crowd. They sensed that he was a real person."

Rowe said Mullins never wanted to be a performer but, instead, a pastor, a teacher and a friend. Mullins often talked about going to another realm. 'And looking back, I doubt if he has any regrets about saying good-bye.' Rowe said.

Memorial contributions may be made to Compassion USA, P.O. Box 7000, Colorado Springs, Col. 80933.

A memorial service will be Saturday in Wichita, Kan.

Calling will be from 4 to 8 p.m. Sept. 24 in Whitewater Christian Church, of which he was a member.

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Singer's Death Leaves Hole in Heart of Church

 kidbrothers.net/articles/wichitaeagle2.html

Members of Central Christian Church in Wichita Remembered Rich Mullins and His Music on Sunday

Erin Kennedy

September 22, 1997

Rich Mullins usually slipped into the last row, sometime after the first hymn and the pastor's opening remarks. Perpetually clad in blue jeans, often needing a shave, the big-name Christian singer hardly attracted a second glance from other members of the congregation - even the young ladies who had driven hours to catch a glimpse of him.

But Central Christian Church's pastor Joe Wright would see him.

"It would almost embarrass him if I would notice and ask him to come sing a praise," Wright said.

On Sunday, two days after Mullins' death in a car crash, Wright was the one singing the praises of the humble man who wrote words that opened hearts.

"We have taken for granted the privilege we at Central Christian Church have had in having Rich here," Wright said, reminding the congregation to remember God is in control of destinies. "God just wanted Rich early, with all the angelic music in him, to prepare for that time when trumpets will sound."

Mullins, 41, was run over and killed by a tractor-trailer Friday night after being thrown from an out-of-control Jeep, 75 miles southwest of Chicago. He and Mitchell McVicker were heading to Wichita for a benefit concert. McVicker, 24, was reported in critical condition Sunday.

The death of the quiet guy in the back row has left a "huge hole" in the

Central Christian Church congregation, said Sherrie McCready, the kid sister of Mullins' Cincinnati Bible College buddy, Sam Howard. It was Howard who brought Mullins to Wichita and to the Central Christian Church in 1988.

Wright's daughter Laura Schlueter confided that Mullins was kicked out of the music school there "for not doing it the way they wanted, I think." But when Amy Grant took his song "Sing Your Praise to the Lord" to hit status, he called his piano teacher at the bible college to thank the teacher for making him practice, Schlueter said.

"People like Rich come around once in a lifetime," McCready said. "My first thought when I heard was: 'He's home.' This world troubled him greatly. Rich didn't know what to do about the pain he saw. But he's home now."

Julie Samaniego had a similar reaction. "I can honestly say that yesterday he met Jesus," said Samaniego, a Central Christian Church member who knew Mullins mostly through his music and from meetings at concerts. "Jesus really was his best friend."

Blake Langhofer, guitar in hand and Mullins' music in his head, stopped to discuss the guitar player who walked on stages barefoot. "We were just jammin' to his music. . . .He was the main male Christian singer," said Langhofer, 16.

It wasn't just rockin' tunes though, it was music with a message. "It's the deepest music you could possibly get," said Miles Hutchinson, 19, who volunteered an example. "He wrote: 'I will fight you for something I don't really want rather than take what you've given to me.' Think about it. It's so true."

"I think Rich had a message to the church not to put God in a box, because God can't be put into a neat little compartment. He's too vast and mysterious," McCready said, sounding a bit like the soul-searching lyrics of her good friend's songs. "Too often the church wants to make God understandable and marketable. Rich had a passion for this and the courage to let God be what he is."

Mullins strived to be true to a gospel message and still his songs were marketable, said McCready. "He wasn't like other writers simplifying things or just pointing out doubts. . . . He was able to point to doubts and give us

hope at the same time," she said.

Even his autograph had a message. Mullins signed all requests with an admonition to "be God's," said Samaniego holding up a CD cover with her daughter Stephanie's name before the "be God's" and Mullins scrawl underneath.

"He would always go out and talk to people after concerts. We'd have to drag him away," said Nichole Lundgren, who sang and toured with Mullins from 1989 to 1996. "He was tireless. He would do anything anyone asked - radio interviews or going to bookstores, talking to a group."

Complex, introspective, humble, generous - and absentminded.

Those are the words friends used to describe Mullins. They tell of his losing keys and shoes and even his instrument on the road. His best friend and fellow musician, known simply as Beaker, was in charge of watching Mullins' clothes, said Lundgren.

But the guy who couldn't find his way to a concert venue even with a map, could puzzle out the intricacies of religion, writing maps for others to follow. "He was literally the most brilliant man I know. I'd come home exhausted from all we had spoken about," said Schlueter who had dated Mullins casually in the past.

Lundgren concurred. "On stage you got a one-dimensional view. But he was complex. Hard to know and hard not to love. One of the greatest things about him was he was real open with his struggles."

The Richmond, Ind., native's greatest hit was "Our God Is An Awesome God," sung in churches across America. He recorded seven albums for Reunion Records, including his latest, "A Liturgy, A Legacy and a Ragamuffin Band," released in 1993. He had recently signed a contract with Myrrh Records to begin work on a new album next month, said his manager, Jim Dunning.

Mullins often talked about how in the music business the singer/songwriter often becomes the star that overshadows his music, said McCready. "Sometimes the person can get in the way of the message. I think now people will hear them (the messages in his songs) more than when he was alive."

Mullins' striving to put the message of God before himself has ended.

All that's left is the message.

Clues to Mullins' Messages

At a Wichita concert, Rich Mullins passed out copies of hand-written notes he had made on what he was thinking as he wrote various songs.

Following are excerpts from those notes:

"I don't know if God wept at Moses' funeral. I don't know if he cried when he killed the first of his creatures to take as skin to clothe this man's earliest ancestors. I don't know who will bury me.

"But I look back over the events of my life and see the hands that carried Moses to his grave lifting me out of mine. In remembering I go back to these places where God met me and I meet him again and I lay my head on his breast, and he shows me the land beyond the Jordan and I suck into my lungs the fragrance of his breath, the power of his presence."

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Crash Kills Christian Musician

 kidbrothers.net/articles/wichitaeagle3.html

Prominent Recording Artist and Former Wichitan Rich Mullins was En Route to a Benefit Performance at Lawrence-Dumont

Jennifer Comes Roy and Lori Lessner

September 21, 1997

Rich Mullins never thought of himself as famous or talented, and never cared about being rich. What he cared about was serving God and serving others - a message of joy that resonates throughout the contemporary Christian music he wrote and recorded.

A former Wichitan and a graduate of Friends University, Mullins, 41, was killed Friday night in an automobile accident in Illinois. Mullins and a friend, Marshall McVicker, 24, were on their way from Chicago to Wichita for a performance Saturday night at Lawrence-Dumont Stadium. The concert was a benefit for a youth ministries organization of the United Methodist Church.

"In the industry, he was considered by many to be the greatest writer of our time," said Mullins' manager and friend, Jim Dunning Jr. "I believe that.

"But if Rich had his preference, I think he'd prefer not to be remembered. Rich would prefer that the God he believed in be remembered."

The accident happened shortly before 10 p.m. Friday on southbound Interstate 39 in north-central Illinois. The Jeep in which the two men were riding flipped and the men were ejected, their bodies landing about 12 yards apart in the southbound lanes. Which of them was driving is not known.

A tractor-trailer also traveling south approached the accident shortly after it happened and swerved to avoid the Jeep in the middle of the lanes, said LaSalle County Sheriff Sgt. Gregory Jacobsen. The rig then struck Mullins,

who died instantly.

McVicker, a Topeka native, suffered massive head injuries and was taken by helicopter to a Peoria hospital, where his condition remained critical late Saturday.

Police have found no motorists who witnessed the accident and are still investigating.

A bachelor, Mullins is survived by his mother Neva, of Richmond, Ind., two older sisters and two younger brothers. Funeral arrangements are pending.

On his mother's side of the family, Mullins was a "birthright Quaker" born and raised in Richmond, whose faith and beliefs were also shaped by the Independent Christian Church, the Methodist church and a year of religious instruction in the Roman Catholic church.

"His great-grandma, who was very influential, taught him hymns when he was very young and he wrote his first song on the piano, when he was 4," said Kathy Sprinkle of Wichita, a friend of Mullins.

Mullins attended Cincinnati Bible College, where his close friends included Sprinkle and Sam Howard, the son of a minister in Wichita. Mullins moved to Wichita in the late 1980s to be a part of the Rev. Maurice Howard's congregation at Central Christian Church.

"About six months after he came to Wichita, Mr. Howard passed away, but Rich chose to stay here and base his ministry and music out of here," Dunning said. "At that time, he tried to coordinate his mission work with his music career, thinking his Christian career would open doors that music wouldn't."

Mullins had recorded nine albums and had more than 50 hit records in his career, which began in the early 1980s. While still a student in Cincinnati, Mullins was offered a recording contract, and his first album caught the attention of another contemporary Christian recording artist, Amy Grant. A song he wrote, "Sing Your Praise to the Lord," became one of Grant's biggest hits.

Mullins had been nominated many times for Dove Awards, Christian contemporary music's equivalent of the Grammy Awards. He was considered a "core artist" in contemporary Christian radio, someone whose

songs become the pillars around which other artists' songs are programmed. His best-known song, "Awesome God," is a modern standard in many Christian churches and is especially popular with young people.

Yet, the soft-spoken Mullins was known as a true paradox - a talented, self-effacing man who refused to let the attention or accolades of the music industry, or his fans, go to his head.

"He would many times in concert liken himself to a child, with God being the Father, and he often thought of his music as the funny-looking drawings that kids do with crayons," Dunning said. "He knew he was touching people deeply, but he was uncomfortable with it because he viewed himself as just a man. Rich truly was a humble person."

Between writing, recording and touring, Mullins completed a degree in 1995 from Friends University in music education. After graduating, he moved to the Navajo reservation near Window Rock, Ariz., teaching music to children on the reservation.

"The hope was that he could organize a choir that might go on the road with him, to expose them to life outside the reservation," Dunning said.

Mullins had recently completed a musical, "Canticle of the Plains," an allegory on the life of St. Francis of Assisi, written as if the advocate of poverty, chastity and obedience were a post-Civil War Kansas cowboy. McVicker, who sang the main part, had been recording in Chicago with Mullins' help. A song from that musical, "Heaven is Waiting," recently hit the Top 40 on the Christian music charts.

Almost 2,000 people were expected to attend Mullins' concert Saturday night, said Kathy Kruger Noble, associate director of communications for the Kansas West Conference of the United Methodist Church. The concert was to close a day of workshops and worship for young people, held Saturday at East Heights United Methodist Church.

Organizers of the youth conference had to announce to the conference attendees the news of Mullins' tragic death.

"Some of them were just sad, in the sense that somebody they admired and someone their friends respected very much had been killed in a tragic way," Noble said. "When I left, there were 75 to 100 kids who were up at the altar, in a prayer circle for him and his family."

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